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AN
APPEAL
TO
REASON,
In a COMPARISON of the
BELIEF
OF THE
CHRISTIANS,
AND
Of the DEISTS.

LONDON:

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OF THE DEISTS.

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Printed for John Smith, Bookseller in
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S nothing has hitherto done better Service to the Cause of the Adversaries of Christianity, than the Charge of its Incredibility; and as it is certainly true that there is no more natural Inducement to believe any thing than the Credibility thereof, nor any Objection harder to be swallowed than absolute Incredibility: The Design of the following Comparison between the *Belief* of the *Christians*, and that of the *Deists*, is to enquire which of the two has the greater Share of Credibility. Now, a Thing may be credible in its Matter; and credible likewise on Account of the good Reasons we have to induce us to believe it. I shall therefore compare them in
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both these Respects, and leave it to any Man to judge. 1st, Which believe the strangest and most incredible Things, And 2^{dly}, Which have the better Reasons to offer for their respective Belief; and, consequently, which of the two Creeds a Man of Understanding would chuse to subscribe, as being more credible in it self, and founded on better Reasons. In Order to be able to determine these Questions, and form a clear Judgement upon the Matter, let us take a View of each *Belief*. I begin with that of the *Christians*.

C H A P. I.

An Account of the Belief of the Christians, concerning the Deity, the Divine Dispensations towards Mankind, and the Reasons of such Dispensations.

THEY believe that there is One, and but One self-existent Being comprehending in himself eternally, and immutably, all manner of infinite Perfection. They believe that together with God the Father, have eternally co-existed, in the same Divine Essence, in an incomprehensible manner, two other Divine Persons, one called the Word, or Son, the other,

other, the Spirit of God. Each of which blessed Persons, (though the one begotten by God the Father, and the other proceeding from God the Father, and the Son;) they yet believe, I say, to be co-eternal, and *one* with the Father: This is what they call the eternal Generation of the Son, and Procession of the Spirit, which they acknowledge to be infinitely above the Conception of Man. They believe that God the Father created all Things that are, out of Nothing, by the Son, and the Spirit. That God at first made one Man, and one Woman, (who were created in a State of Perfection,) and as a Trial of their Free-will and Obedience, gave them a Command not to eat of the Fruit of one particular Tree, positively denouncing Death in Case of Disobedience; which Command if they had obeyed, they, and all their Issue had enjoyed Immortality. That they being tempted by the Malice of another Creature, who either assumed the Shape of the Serpent, or used that Beast as his Instrument, transgressed this Command, and ate of the forbidden Fruit; and for that Reason were, according to his Denuntiation, deprived of their original Perfection, and made subject to Misery and Death, with all their Posterity; who issuing from depraved Parents, naturally and necessarily inherit the Corruption, and Mortality of their Progenitors; have a sickly and infirm

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Nature ; Appetites irregular, and not subject to Reason ; and Wills more inclinable to Evil than Good : Infomuch that there never was any of the Seed of *Adam*, who did not, in some Instances, transgress both the internal Law of Reason, and such other external Laws, as they believe to have been occasionally added by God. So that the whole Race of Mankind was fallen from Happiness, and was to be looked upon as lost, and ruined for ever. The Sentence of Death was irrevocably pronounced upon them all, (for God is immutably just and true, and will not alter what he has once righteously and positively decreed ;) they were, or would be, obnoxious to the Divine Justice, as wilful Transgressors ; and were so odious to the Divine Perfection, and Purity, on Account of the inherent Depravity and Irregularity of their Nature, that supposing their Souls to exist after their Separation from the Body, and even that God, in his Mercy, would have remitted the Punishment due to their Transgressions, yet still neither would his Purity and Perfection have suffered him to admit them to any Degree of Happiness before him, in their present Condition ; nor would their Souls have been Subjects capable of any true Happiness, unless the Disorder introduced into their Nature by Sin, were rectified ; for a Clock may as well go right with some of the
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prime Wheels out of Order, as a Soul be truly happy, whose Faculties are not in their true and original State. But, alas ! such Remission of their Offences, and Restoration of their Nature, they believe, could never have been granted ; for it is as much the Nature of God to be Just, as to be Good ; he made Man a Creature capable of being judged, and giving an Account of his Actions ; which he would not have done, if he had not designed to judge us accordingly, and reward, or punish us, after our Deserts ; both his Wisdom, and the essential Rectitude of his Nature, require him to deal thus by all Creatures endowed with Reason, and Liberty of Will ; without this, his essential Justice would be useless, and inactive, which is contrary to his Nature. It was necessary therefore that Justice should be exercised, necessary that it should be satisfied, in dealing Right to all, and awarding due Punishment to Sin, and due Rewards to Obedience ; otherwise God could not have been infinitely Just, which he must be, or not be God ; for if he were not infinitely Just, he would not be all Perfect, as the Deity certainly is ; and if Justice were inactive, and were not to deal by all according to their Merits, how would it be Justice ? Nor was this only exacted by the essential Justice of the Divine Nature, but they believe also that the Honour of God demanded the same ;

same ; the Honour of his supream Government, and Authority, which has been trampled on, and affronted by the Disobedience of Mankind ; with the Honour, and Dignity whereof it was by no means consistent to have his good, and righteous Laws violated, and his reasonable Commands transgressed, with Impunity. For what Government would he exercise in this Case ? If he only gave Laws, and did not punish the Contempt of them ? His Honour therefore as a Legislator, which he certainly is, if we insist on no more than the internal Law of Reason, was likewise concerned that the Transgressions of Mankind should receive a proper Punishment. Nor let it be urged, that Clemency and Mercy to the Offenders, would have been as much, or more to his Honour, and Glory, as a Governor ; especially considering what Title, and Plea, to such Mercy, the Children of Men have, as being subjected to Death, and having their Nature vitiated, merely through the Fault of their Parents, which doubtless is some Alleviation of their Guilt, some Ground to expect Mercy ; it will not do, I say, to urge this, not only for the Reason already mentioned, because all Men have been actual and wilful Transgressors in their own Persons, and therefore it is necessary that a Being of perfect Justice should punish them according to their Deeds ; but also, because such Proceeding

ceeding as this would both give Encouragement to other Creatures to offend, and if any were punished, give them Cause to complain that his Mercies were partial, and not extended to all. So that all must be punished according to the Determination of Justice, or none, or he could not avoid the Imputation of Partiality, nor his Justice, and his Mercy be dealt equally to all, as it undoubtedly is. A Property which so evidently belongs to the Deity, that a *Heathen* Poet could say the supream Being was * the same to all. The *Christians* believe therefore, that not only the Justice, but the Honour also of God, as he is a Legislator, † obliges him to animadvert on the Breach of his Laws. Which they believe he is yet farther obliged to by the Attribute of his Truth. For when he denounced the above-mentioned Sentence of Death, on them and their Issue, if they disobeyed, he could not be supposed to mean, that their Souls should only be separated from their Bodies, to be happy in such separate State; but either that they should forfeit, and lose all Happiness, and be wholly extinct; or else, together with their sinful Posterity be obnoxious

* Jupiter omnibus idem. Virg. † When we say God is obliged to do any Thing, we mean such an Obligation as arises from his own immutable Rectitude of Nature. To wit, that it seems Right to his infinite Wisdom, to act in this, or that manner, and that therefore his Perfection is such, that he cannot incline to act otherwise.

ous to such future Evil and Misery, as their Iniquities should in Justice deserve. His unalterable Truth therefore did likewise require that the Sentence pronounced on them should not be remitted. Thus they believe his essential Truth, and Justice, as well as the Honour, and Authority, of his Laws, required that the Transgressions of Mankind should be punished ; so that the Punishment of Sin was necessary and unavoidable, unless the Deity could be supposed to act contrary to his own essential Attributes, which is supposing an utter Impossibility, and Contradiction ; supposing him essentially *Just*, and *True*, and yet not *Just*, and *True*. However, as Goodness is likewise an unquestionable Attribute of the Divine Nature, as the Race of Mankind were reduced to this Wretchedness, this Depravity, and Propensity to Evil, not by any immediate Act of their own, but by the Fault of their first Parents, and even those Parents, though highly culpable, yet were seduced and ruined by the Malice of another ; the Goodness of God, they believe, failed not to take Pity on our wretched Estate, and determined to shew us as much Mercy and Favour, as he could without Derogation from his Justice and Truth, and the Honour of his Majesty and Laws. Now, his Wisdom being Infinite, he knew himself able to shew infinite Goodness and Mercy to Mankind, notwith-

notwithstanding the positive Demands of his Justice, and Honour, and the seeming Impossibility which terrifies us ; and resolved, (they believe) in his infinite Mercy and Willdom, so to do ; and to take a Method which would equally satisfy, and magnify all his Divine Attributes, his Justice, his Truth, his Holiness, his Glory, his Goodness. For this purpose, they believe, that, Fore-knowing what would happen, and the Difficulty which to his Creatures would thence seem to arise, he decreed even before the World was, that his own eternal and co-essential Son, should assume our Nature, and be made Man, and should satisfy the Demands of his Justice, and Honour, by voluntarily undertaking to suffer the Punishment that was due to our Sins, and die for our Redemption ; and that Satisfaction being thus made, to his Truth, by our Death, and to his Justice, and Honour, by the voluntary Sufferings of the Son of God for our Sins, and we being thereby acquitted from the Guilt of them, He would be reconciled to us through his Mediation, (to as many, I mean, as would repent, and believe in this Redeemer,) and cause us, as it were, to be Born again of his Spirit, and to become new Creatures, endowed with new Principles of Life and Action, by his Influence and Operation, and having the almost effaced Image of our Crea-

tor revived in our Minds as by a new and second Impression. All this, they believe, He has actually performed ; and that Jesus, called the Christ, was the eternal Son of God manifested, for this purpose, in the Flesh, which he assumed in a pure and sanctified Virgin, by the over-shadowing Power and Influence of the Holy Spirit of God ; that the Occasion of his Incarnation, was, thus voluntarily to offer himself to the Divine Justice, as a Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, which he accordingly performed by submitting to be crucified for them, a Death of Malediction, appointed for Malefactors ; by whose Sufferings they believe we were acquitted ; whose Blood they look upon to be the Price of our Redemption from future Misery and Death ; who having thus paid our Debt, and our Ransom, rose again by his own Power from the Dead, and ascended into *Heaven*, from whence he sent down the Holy Spirit on his Disciples, in order to qualify them for the Conversion of the World, and be a *Witness* with them of the Truth of his Resurrection ; and where he will remain continuing to make Intercession for us till the Consummation of all Things ; at which time he will return to Judge the World in Righteousness, and raising, by his Power, even our dead Bodies from the Grave in an uncorruptible Condition,

tion, to be re-united to our Souls, will render to every Man according to his Works. Tribulation, and Anguish everlasting to them that have wilfully continued to do Evil, and everlasting Happiness and Glory to as many as did honestly endeavour to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present Life. To conclude, the *Christians* believe, that the World was never left without the Assistance of Divine Revelation ; that our first Parents knew the adorable Being who created them, and were taught by Him after their Fall, what manner of Worship would be acceptable to Him, and received from Him such Laws as were necessary at that time, with the Hopes of a Redeemer, typified to them in the Institution of living Sacrifices, and of shedding Blood, for the Atonement of Sin ; and that they instructed their Children accordingly. That when the whole Race of Mankind were destroyed by a Deluge for having corrupted their Manners, and the Truths they had been taught, these Precepts, together with the Hopes of a future Redeemer, were again renewed to *Noah*, and his Children ; that when their Posterity, likewise, had buried the Knowledge of the Truth under a Multitude of Corruptions, God chose one good Man, and his Offspring, to whom he revealed his Will in a Body of righteous and excellent Laws, giving them

Hopes, and Assurances of a Redeemer to come ; whom, according to his gracious Promise, he sent at the Time which his Wisdom had fore-appointed, who brought us yet a more perfect Revelation of the Divine Will, as it is now transmitted to us in the Writings of the Apostles, and has, at different times, been published and proposed to every Nation, and People upon the Face of the Earth. They believe also, that all the Wise Men who appeared among the *Gentiles*, were raised up for their Instruction, by the Goodness of God, to preserve them from degenerating into brutish Barbarity, and to be as glimmering Sparks of Light to qualify, and irradiate their Darkness, till the great Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness, should rise. Thus they believe God to have all along expressed a Fatherly and Creatorial Goodness towards Mankind, notwithstanding our Depravity and manifold Corruptions ; and in due time, to have display'd his Benevolence and Love to us, even infinitely, in the Incarnation of his Son. This is what the Christians believe concerning God, his Oeconomy towards Mankind, and the Reasons thereof ; great part of which, they confess to be Articles of Astonishment, no less than of Faith, and to be really wonderful in the highest degree ; but affirm, at the same time, that they have abundantly sufficient

ent Reasons to induce them to believe it, and that there is not one Particular thereof, but what is capable of a reasonable and solid Defence. However, because the *Deists* are wont to object against the Incredibility of this Creed, we are contented, even before we offer our Reasons for believing thus, or alledge any thing in its Defence, to compare it with that of the *Deists*, even in point of Credibility. Let us now therefore take a view of the Belief of the *Deists*, and see, if it does not contain Things harder to be believed, and require greater Credulity in those who subscribe it, than any thing we have recited.

C H A P. II.

An Account of the Creed of the Deists, or what they believe concerning the Deity, and his Conduct towards Mankind.

THEY believe, that there is one Supream Being, of infinite Goodness, Wisdom, Justice, and Power, by whom all Things were created. They believe, that tho' he be infinitely Holy, and Perfect Himself, and consequently can approve nothing but what is

is Holy and Perfect in its kind, and withal infinitely Wise and Powerful to effect what He pleases, yet that He has created us in such a State of Imperfection, that we are naturally proner to Evil, than Good; that the better Part of us is overborn by the worse, and that we are impure even in our own Sight, and Judgement. (Strange Creatures to come out of the Hands of a Being of infinite Perfection, and Power!—) They believe, that tho' God is infinitely good, and must consequently have the greatest Benevolence for his Creatures, yet He has created Mankind in a miserable Condition, both with regard to the Weakness of their Bodies, and the Infirmary, and Ignorance of their Minds; That, good as he is, He could be contented to make Creatures to be subject to such a Number of painful, and shocking Diseases of the Body; that, good as he is, He has either created us, or at least suffer'd us, as far backward as our Knowledge can reach, (and how much farther who knows?) to continue in miserable Darkness, without knowing any thing of our Original; of the Cause of that Propensity to Evil which we discover in our selves; of the Occasion, or Reason, of our Mortality, which has all the Marks, and Appearance of a Punishment, and indeed may be demonstrated to be so, and of which, consequently, we might even
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in Justice expect to be informed; without knowing wherefore He has been less kind to the Female Sex of the noblest Species of Creatures, than to the Females of any other, in appointing their Pains in exclusion of their Young to be greater, whereas He certainly could have caused them also to bring forth with little, if any, Uneasiness; without knowing any thing of the Methods of His Providence here, or of our future Condition (if there be any) hereafter; without knowing what Worship will be acceptable to Him, and whether He will receive us into his Favour, and Mercy, after grievous Offences against Reason, or not: In short, that tho' He be infinitely Good, yet He has left us to be guided wholly by our own Reason, altho' He knew that there would not be one in a hundred in whom it would ever arrive to such Perfection, as to be able to direct him in any obscure Point; that we should be led by Example more than by Reason, and that the Children would certainly inherit the Errors of their Fathers; all this notwithstanding, they believe this infinitely good Being to have left us entirely to ourselves, tho' He could not but foresee what would be the Consequence of it; yet He, tho' Good and Benevolent, (they believe) regarded it not, but has suffered us to go astray from the beginning till now, without
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any Endeavour to set us right, and reclaim us; without any publick, or manifest Re-proof of our Deeds, beholding Mankind fallen into such absurd Notions, as to think they should please, and pacify the Deity by shedding the Blood of Animals, and this without any Foundation, or Ground for such a Thought; as to acknowledge a Multitude of Gods, and even to worship the Work of their own Hands, corruptible, and lifeless Figures of Wood, Stone, or Metals, instead of Himself the Eternal, Living, and Invisible Creator; yet they believe Him to have beheld all this extravagant Foolishness for some Thousands of Years, without any the least Offer to rectify the Mistakes of His Creatures, tho' He saw that the Number of the Wise was so small, and the Multitude so wedded to their Religion, that they would certainly go on thus for ever, without his Interposition: Yet He, they believe, tho' infinitely Good, permitted it to be so, and suffer'd them, without any Expression of His Displeasure, to pursue all the Extravagancies their wild Fancies could invent; He has overlooked, and beheld Mankind bewildered in their Searches after Truth, losing themselves in various Walks of Error, as in a Wood, from the Beginning to this Day, without any Inclination to show them the right Way; doubtless, He is our
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Father, He has formed, and given us Life ; yet his Goodness, they think, is not concerned in what we do : What tho' He be infinitely benevolent, and we his Workmanship, the Effects of his Wisdom, and Power, miserably blinded with Variety of Errors, and the greater part of us unable to extricate our selves ! — We are nothing to Him, they say ; He feels no paternal Yearnings of Tenderness towards his Works ! — What tho' our Errors are deplorable, and our Condition compaffionable in the highest degree ! — His Goodness moves him not to commiserate our Blindness, and help us ! — He has made the Earth by his Almighty Power, and all that dwell on it, but his *Glory*, they say, is not concerned in being known, or honoured therein ! — He so little regards whom, or in what manner Men worship, that he has suffered Mankind, in all Ages, to be drawn away by one Imposture or other ; while the Religion of Nature, the only true One, (*according to them*) was never any where openly professed, no not so much as by a small Number ! All Impostors, even the vilest, and most extravagant, have had their avowed Followers, and Sects ; while the Deity Himself has in no Age (that we know of) had so much as a Handful of Men, no, not three or four, who dared publickly to worship Him according to the Religion of Nature, in con-

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tempt of all human Inventions, and Superstitions. Every false God, and false Religion have had their Temples, their Priests, and publick Worship; while the only true God, and Religion, (if there is no other Truth but the Religion of Nature) have never had so much as one single Temple erected to their Honour, one Priest devoted to their Service, to celebrate openly his Worship, and glorify his great and adorable Name, with the reasonable Sacrifices of Prayer, and Praise. Strange, (even if He is so displeased with us, that his *Goodness* will not incline Him to compassionate our Blindness,) that He should not think his *Honour* concerned in the Case! but hardly stranger, than it is, that any Man can think this to be the Truth!— Other Religions boast of the Attestation He has given them by Revelations, and Miracles; while the only true One (as they think it) has never received the least Testimony of his Regard, tho' it is impossible it should ever be established, unless He will vouchsafe to appear in its Favour; nay, must ever continue even defective without it; (for what Authority besides will ever be able to establish its Exercise, and prescribe an uniform manner of Worship to Mankind *? What Wisdom inform us of many Things necessary to be known?) — tho' it has nothing

* See Dr. Rogers's Sermons.

thing but Unbelief to oppose to the Miracles recorded by other Religions, as Testimonials of their proceeding from *Him*; nay, tho' two of them, the *Jewish* Religion, and *Christianity*, have such Appearance of Truth, that the Exercise of Reason is not sufficient to extricate and convince us of our Deception, but the more diligent in our Enquiries and Reasonings we are, the more we are confirmed in them; and yet He, *infinitely* Good as he is, affords us no Assistance to discover the Imposture; gives no Attestation to the Truth; yea, tho' we most earnestly beseech *Him* to bring us to the Knowledge thereof, tho' we have all the Regard for *Him*, that becomes us as his Creatures; are continually grateful for all his Goodness and Bounty, which we daily Experience with regard to our Bodies; and are so desirous of nothing, as of fulfilling his Will, and performing what is pleasing in his Sight; and tho' (as I have said) we cannot find out our Error, and the more we examine, the more reasonable the Belief of it daily appears. — Would He suffer us to be thus inextricably hampered with Delusion, and Error? Would He not assist us, and bear witness to the Truth? — We must think He would, and cannot think otherwise. But they believe the contrary; the *Deists*, I say, believe God, whose Goodness we daily experience in his bountiful

Provision for the Life, and Welfare of the Body, to behold this miserable Necessity of Information with which our Minds are distracted, without offering, in his Compassion, to afford us any Assistance, or Direction in the Case: That is, they believe Him, who is demonstrably so good, as to have taken Care for the Supply of our least Wants, to be void of all Compassion and Concern, with respect to our greatest. A Belief so contrary to the Dictates of Reason, and to our natural Notions of the Divine Goodness, and Wisdom, that one can hardly find any thing equally difficult to be believed, except it be the extraordinary Particulars which they believe concerning Christianity, and the Propagators thereof: Which we will now take a view of, because this View will be of considerable Service to us, when we come to compare *the Two Opinions*, and to enquire which of them contains the most incredible Points, and requires greater Credulity in him who professes to believe them. * They believe, then, concerning the Propagators of the Christian Religion, That those very Per-

* I must here own my Obligations to what Mr. Ditton has accurately wrote concerning the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*; part of which Discourse I have transcribed in the following Pages, tho' the Order is somewhat transposed, and some few Additions made to it. I thought it both imprudent and unnecessary, to express in my own manner, what had been so excellently set forth by a much abler Hand.

Persons, who but a few Hours before had so little Spirit and Courage left them, that they forsook their Master in his greatest Extremities, and after all their Protestations of inviolable Constancy and Fidelity to Him, were yet so over-powered by terrible Apprehensions, that they durst not own themselves his Disciples, no, nor scarce show their Heads by Day-light for fear of the *Jews*; that these Men, I say, could, *all of a sudden*, grow so resolute, as to venture upon that bold and hazardous Undertaking, of Forcing the Sepulcher, and carrying off his Body. Nay, that they did not only venture, but did actually perform it; and that not a Man, of all the Guards placed there by the *Jews*, was alarmed, or disturbed, but slept on securely till the Design was executed; (tho' the Occasion of their watching was of such Consequence, and they were to continue their Watch but three Hours, being then relieved by others, who watched the same space, and the Punishment of sleeping on Duty was so severe by their Martial Law.) — And yet after all, could tell very well, when they awaked, that the Disciples had been there, and stollen the Body away. They believe all this, I say, to be possible, and true; or else, that the Guards themselves, tho' set there on purpose to prevent a Thing which might prove of so ill Consequence to
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the *Jewish* Nation, and possibly even to *Rome*, in the Revolt of this Nation, yet favoured the Attempt, and only counterfeited Sleep, to give the Impostors an Opportunity of finishing what they came about : or at least, that the Apostles were venturesome and foolish, and rich enough to bribe a number of Soldiers to contribute towards so extravagant, and villainous, and mischievous a Project ; and yet that none of these Soldiers discovered the Secret, even when they saw what Use the Apostles made of the Lye, and how troublesome (in their Notion) they began to be, not only to that State, but even to many other Parts of the World. And yet one such Witness would have been of greater Service to effect the Suppression of Christianity, than all the Punishments that were invented to inflict on its Professors. The latter, it was evident, was not able to prevent the Encrease of their Converts, but this, in all probability, had it been true, and well attested, would have effectually put a stop to it. — They believe, that Men thus rash, and desperate, busied in an Enterprize of so much Danger for fear of the Soldiers awaking, (of so much hazard, at least, for fear of a Discovery) and which therefore required all possible Expedition and Dispatch, would spend precious Time in unaccountable Niceties, and do such Things as could be of

no manner of Service to them ; but on the other Hand, would evidently expose them to the Danger of being surprized, and caught. That instead of taking a dead Body away wrapped up, and as they found it, they would first divest it of its burial Cloaths, and then dispose them in several Parcels by themselves, some in one Place, and some in another ; (for that they were so disposed of cannot be doubted ; for it would have been to no purpose to affirm this, which might have been so easily denied and disproved, if it had not been Truth.) and not rather chuse to carry off all together, as Thieves would infallibly have done, who were in haste, and knew not but the next minute would either bring the Guards about them, or cause something to interveen, to the Confusion of their Design: Tho' Persons in their Circumstances, would hardly, one would have thought, have stood to dress up their Story of his Resurrection with such Niceties as these. Nor could they do it from any Fear of having them found in their Hands ; for certainly those Persons, who could have found a safe and private Repository for the Body of *Jesus Christ*, after they had taken it out of its Tomb, could also have found a way to dispose of the burial Cloaths, that they might never have been seen more to discover the Trick. — They believe farther, that the

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Roman Officers, and the *High-Priest*, and *Sanhedrim*, were uncommonly tender, and preposterously merciful on so extraordinary an Occasion ; or, how comes it that we never heard of these Soldiers being punished for their Negligence ; of the *Jewish* Elders being pressing, and urgent with the Governor for it, or even of their prosecuting the Matter at all ? — Unless they chuse to believe that the Soldiers bribed them, and that there was not one Man in the whole *Sanhedrim*, who had Vertue, and Courage enough, to show his Resentments on so important an Occasion. However it was, their Behaviour must be allowed to be a great Over-sight at this Time, and to make the Story of the Body being stolen, look very suspicious, if it does not amount to a tacit Confession of the Truth of the Gospel Account. Instead of all this Silence, and Mildness, one might rather have expected to have heard of their being enraged to the highest degree ; to have had them represented as inveighing with all imaginable Indignation against the Negligence, or Treachery of the Soldiers ; one might have expected to have heard that they were not satisfied, till they had caused them to be punished with Severity ; that they immediately offered Pardon, and a considerable Reward to any one who would acknowledge the Deed, or discover

discover the Body, or the Authors of the Theft. Such Proceeding as this would have made the Affair look *somewhat* like a Piece of Villainy, or at least, would have *appeared* as if they had really thought it to be so, but we find no such Thing, that has arrived to our Knowledge, no, not in their own Authors; but only an Assertion that the Body was stolen; which might very well be suspected, if it were only on account of their Coolness in prosecuting the Affair. — To proceed, — They believe that the Apostles having thus *strangely* conveyed away the Body, and the Soldiers thus *strangely* escaped, the former were mad enough not only to resolve to stand it out before the Nation of the *Jews*, that their Master was actually risen from the Dead, tho' persecuted, beat, and imprisoned for so doing, but also that they found a large Number of Men, (about five Hundred, they say) whom they engaged in the same Plot, and who maintained the same Story in the same extravagant, and obstinate manner as themselves; nay farther, that they not only endeavoured to bring over the *Jews* to the Belief of this Fiction, but dividing the World among them, travelled all over it, endeavouring to persuade the *Gentiles* also, that this *Jesus* was risen from the Dead, was appointed the only Saviour, and Judge of Mankind, and had given them Com-

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mission to call upon all to forsake the Religion in which they had been educated, and to believe in His Name, worshipping, or acknowledging no other but the God of the *Jews* as now manifested to the World in a Trinity of Persons. The maddest Design (had it been of their own Contrivance) that could possibly be conceived ! Notwithstanding which, — They believe that this despicable and romantic Company of wilful Impostors, and Deceivers, Men of a hated Nation, and Religion, without Learning and Discipline, without Skill and Experience, without any of the Arts of pleasing and recommending themselves to Mankind, could, and did run down all the Wit, and Power, and Policy of the World; and preaching a most despised, incredible, and *seemingly* ridiculous Doctrine, directly contrary to all the worldly Interests and Humours of Men, to their Religion and Customs, and to their Reason and Philosophy too; could, and did propagate the Belief of it far and wide thro' the Earth, so that there was scarce a Nation in the whole Compass of the Globe, but what, in whole, or in part, received this Fiction, as the most sacred Truth of God, and laid all the Strefs of their Salvation upon it. Or if they have so much Charity for the Apostles, as not to think them crafty and designing Impostors, they must believe, that
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all this was done by Lunatics, and Madmen, that Men hurried by the Impetus of a wild extravagant Fancy, were Masters of all that *Conduct* and *Management*, that *Argument* and *Address* which was requisite to bring about these astonishing Effects. Or, if they find it too hard to suppose, that a Company of distracted Men should ever be able to argue with so much Art, and Force, as to overpower all the Wisdom and Learning of the World; then they must think the Rest of Mankind, who believed them, to be likewise as mad as they! that they were convinced, and persuaded by mere *Enthusiasm*, that they mistook down-right raving for the strongest Reason, and a Chain of absurd incoherent Falsities for bright and evident Demonstrations of Truth: That all the Sages, Statesmen and Philosophers who embraced Christianity, in great Numbers, as well as the Poor and Illiterate, believed they had Proofs which they had not; thought Things were plain and clear to them, which were not; fancied irresistible Strength, Majesty, and Eloquence, in an empty Noise, and Sound of Words, made by a Company of poor distempered Men, who neither knew, nor cared what they said; or lastly, they must believe, that the greatest and most remarkable Revolution that the World ever knew or heard of, was effected without ei-

ther any *proper* and *necessary* natural Means, or any *supernatural* Help, and Assistance. For all the natural Means that can be thought of, are reducible to the Heads, of *Compulsion* or *Persuasion*; whether by Reason, and Rhetoric; or Bribes, and other Temptations of that kind. These are all, and the only Ways that Men can make use of to accomplish any Design of this Nature. And I challenge all the World to shew me in a single Instance, which of them all was made use of by the Apostles in the Propagation of the Gospel. The Disputations of Reason they subjected to Faith; the Arts of Rhetorick they either knew not, or despised; to bribe the World was impossible. Then as for *Supernatural* Assistances, it is past all doubt that they could have none, even in the Opinion of the *Deists* themselves; for God would not, nor could not afford them any Help, and that whether they were wilful Impostors, or mere undesigning crack-brained Enthusiasts; for the Work they were engaged in, being a horrible Cheat upon Mankind, it would be Blasphemy to suppose Him to have concurred to the Success of it. And as for *Demons*, and evil Spirits, these Gentlemen laugh at all Stories of their Existence, and Operations, Magic Arts, and Enchantments, Conjurati-on, and Witchcraft, are Things quite out of their Way of Belief; and therefore to be
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sure they will not suspect there were any Artifices of this kind made use of to delude Men's Understandings, and to help on this stupendous Revolution in the World. If they should ; — We affirm that the Goodness of the Deity was positively concerned not to let Mankind be drawn, into such grievous and abominable Errors, by the Practices of evil Spirits, and that we may be confident He would not be an indifferent Spectator in the Case ; for as this supposes the Appearance of miraculous Powers, and preternatural Gifts, a Man could not answer the Rejection of such Testimonials, when the Doctrine could not be proved inconsistent with the Divine Attributes ; for which Reason, the Goodness of the Supream Being would certainly never suffer his Creatures to be thus inevitably imposed on. — So that here, I say, was the most surprizing Turn, that ever was given to the Affairs of the World, given by nothing at all ; brought about, by, no-body knows, or can guess, or pretend to assign what it was. Neither Heaven, nor Hell was concerned in the Matter. There was nothing in, or of Mankind that can be shown to be capable of producing such an Effect, according to the ordinary Laws of Nature, and the known Experience of the World ; neither Wit, and Learning ; nor Arts, and Intrigues ; nor Money,
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and Interest ; nor open Force, and Violence ; and I dare say, these Gentlemen can tell us of no other ways beside these, by which Parties, and Factions are ever made in the World. But we will go on.— They believe, That these twelve poor Fishermen, were not only able, without any sort of Assistance, to compass this vast Design of converting the World, and making it stoop to the Laws they imposed ; but also, that they laid their Plot so deep, that the Effects of it should be permanent, and lasting, and no succeeding Age, or Generation be able to fathom it, and prove it to be a Cheat. Tho' many, and they in particular with their whole Stock of Learning, and Wit, have endeavoured to do it. Farther — They must either show what these Men could propose to gain by their Labours, or believe that they had absolutely divested themselves of all the Principles of Self-Love, Tenderness, Care, and regard to their own Preservation, and Happiness ; that they despised all the Comforts, and Enjoyments of Life ; that they ventured upon Poverty and Misery, upon Obloquy and Shame, upon Persecution and Torment, and Death and Damnation itself in the next World (if there be any such Thing) and all for nothing ; for no End, or Purpose that can be imagined, or thought of. That they bid defiance to all that humane Nature
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can ever dread, or shun in this World, without having any Design in view, without being acted by any Motives, or having any Grounds, or Reasons for what they did; for a Design that bears no Proportion to Men's Actions, is no Design at all, just as an Agent, or Cause, that is wholly incapable to produce such, or such Effect, is, with respect to that Effect, no Cause at all; and that is demonstrably the Case here. For it is manifest from all the Circumstances of the Matter, that these Persons could have no End in view, that bore any Proportion to the Actions they did, or the Dangers they ventured upon. Nay, they had none but dark, and dismal Prospects before them, and (instead of quickening Motives) they had the greatest Discouragements to Action that Men could ever possibly lie under, and therefore there is no Remedy, but we must suppose them to be a sort of Men, specifically distinct from all others in the World; to be made after such a manner, and endowed with such Tempers, and Dispositions, as no other Men besides themselves ever were. Because Mankind is influenced by such Motives as Hope and Fear; * they are led by Prospects of Interest, Gain, Honour, or Favour among their Fellow Creatures; or else by Principles of Piety, and Devotion; so that what they do, is
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* See *Ditton*, Prop. 1. 2. Part. 2.

either the Effect of a superstitious, and mistaken, or else of a truly Religious Zeal for God. Whereas all but the last, are evidently excluded from the present Case; for it is manifest they could not, nor did not propose to themselves any worldly Advantage, for they soon found what Treatment they were to expect from the World; and mistaken or deceived they could not be, if Men may repose any trust in their Senses; and consequently it must run up to this monstrous Conclusion at last, *viz.* That God Almighty had made a Set of preposterous, irregular Creatures, fit to carry on a wicked Design in the World, that required something very extraordinary, and particular in the Constitutions of those that were to have the Management of it, and permitted them to seduce a vast Number of Persons, and those the best, and honestest Part of Mankind. But farther——They believe that these Men formally published a fictitious Account of the Miracles wrought by their Master, and yet that none of their Adversaries of the *Jews*, or *Gentiles*, ever undertook to disprove the Matter of Fact. Strange and unaccountable! Was not this deserting the Cause? Would not such Conduct incline a Man to think, that the Matter was too notoriously known to be denied? —— They believe also, that they talked of Miracles wrought by themselves

selves, which yet they never performed, or which at least were no more than juggling Contrivances, and Cheats; and yet that none of their numerous Converts ever questioned their reality, or took any care to be satisfied of the Truth of them, before they would become their Disciples.——They believe, tho' these pretended miraculous Gifts were all lyes, and juggling, *that* Multitudes in all Places were so convinced of the divine Power which accompanied the Apostles, that they were ready in Crowds to lay down their Lives for the Faith, nay were so deceived as to believe that this Power remained in the Church, long after the Death of the Apostles; when, in reality, there never was (*as they believe*) any such Power in Nature. — They believe also, that the Apostles pretended to talk a great Number of Languages by the mere Gift of God, nay farther, that they undertook to bestow this strange Gift upon others by Imposition of their Hands, and accordingly, that they had the assurance, in their Letters to their Converts, to talk to them as if they had actually received such Gifts by this Means, when none of them had ever received any such thing. And yet that none of their Converts had Sense enough to make the least question concerning the Matter. — They believe, that these Men were not

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only so mad as to spend their Days in such continual fatigue and hazard for the Propagation of this Lye, (*as they think it*) but, finally, were so resolutely bent on promoting their Imposture, that they carried their Obstinacy to the last Gasps, and most of them sealed it with their Blood. A most strange Conduct, to proceed thus resolutely in their Endeavours, when they found they had nothing to hope, and so much to fear in this Life ; and even to die at last for their Fiction, when they had nothing to hope, and so much to fear, if there be any Life after this ! — They believe, that a Company of the greatest Impostors that ever the World had, and who therefore must necessarily be the worst Men that ever were, did, notwithstanding, furnish Mankind with the most exact System of Morality that ever was, and taught such Rules of living, as were never to be expected from all the Schools of Philosophy in the World. That Men, whose only Purpose and Design was to cheat and abuse the World, should yet industriously lay the surest Foundations for the Peace, and Happiness of it, that ever were, or could be laid. That the vilest, and most notorious Hypocrites would spend all their Time, and their very Lives too, in indefatigable labours, to make other Men upright, and sincere ; and tho' their whole Business, on this Hypothesis,

pothesis, was nothing else but lying, and deceiving, would yet denounce everlasting Damnation, and insist upon it, that no less than this, should be the Punishment of all those who allowed themselves in such Practices. That having themselves no Notion at all of the great, and glorious God, they should yet impart the most rational, and becoming Notions of Him to the rest of Mankind, and, by no other Principles but those of pure Atheism, and Irreligion, kindle a Flame of Desire in the Hearts of Men to worship, and serve Him. In a Word, that they took infinitely more pains to contradict, and confute themselves, nay, to expose themselves to all the World, as the most abandoned Sinners that ever came into it, than they needed to have done, to have established the best Reputation, and to have gotten an immortal Fame amongst Men. That they compiled their System of Religion as a standing Monument to their own Shame, and that all their Sermons, and Writings, were but so many Satyrs, and Lampoons upon themselves. To come to an end, if there be any End of the Absurdities to which they must assent; — They believe, That so extravagant a Fiction, (*as they call it*) tho' its Suppression was ten times attempted by the cruellest Persecutions, could be able, not only to stand its ground against

all this Opposition, but even to triumph over all its Enemies, and without Force, and only by what we, as well as they, call the *Foolishness of Preaching*, to drive Idolatry quite out of the World, which all the Philosophy of the *Grecians* and *Romans* never dared even to attempt; and to cause the One supream Being to be every where believed in, and adored, tho' at the same time it caused this *Jesus* who was crucified, and whose Body *they* suppose his Disciples to have stolen, to be adored as the Son of God, and One Eternally with Him. All this, I say, they believe to have happened, not only without any Interposition of Providence to preserve it, but even tho' (supposing it an Imposture) nothing could well be more abominable in the Sight of the Supream Being; That is, They must believe God, who is infinitely Good, who is Holy, and Just, and abhors all Lyes, and Impostures, and who will not give his Glory to another, (for it is not fit that He should) to have looked on, and beheld this wicked Imposture (*in their Supposition*) gaining ground all the World over, and teaching Mankind to give those Honours to a Creature, in Conjunction with Himself, which are only due to Himself, and yet to have suffered it to proceed, and draw after it, the best, the most innocent, and well-meaning Part of Mankind,

kind, those who most deserved his Favour and Care. Which *They* must reconcile, if they can, with his Goodness, and Love of Truth, for *We* cannot. All this, the *Deists* believe, as well concerning the Supream Being, as with respect to the Apostles, and those converted by their Preaching. All which, to me at least, seems very incredible, if possible to be believed. However, because these Gentlemen seem to have thought otherwise hitherto, let us now, as we designed, compare the two Beliefs, and see which is more incredible, and harder to be believed.

C H A P. III.

TO begin with the Creed of the Christians;—It is true, many Articles thereof are astonishingly wonderful, such as never could have entered into our Thoughts concerning the Deity, or his Divine Dispensations, if He had not been pleased to reveal them unto us; but then they are never the less credible on this Account, (if we have sufficient Arguments to induce us to believe it a Divine Revelation,) but rather the more so; for our own Reason might teach us to expect to hear Things wonderful to us, if ever the Supream, the Eternal, and Infinite Being,

Being, should be pleased to reveal Himself to us, and give us any Account of his Nature, the Methods of his Government, and his Divine Dispensations. We might naturally expect, I say, to hear Things amazing to us, Things not to be comprehended by our Understanding; for how should Creatures every way *finite*, have any adequate Idea's, or Conception of the Nature, or Attributes, of a Being every way *infinite*? We need not therefore, we see, (if we have any good Reason to think these Things revealed, which will quickly appear) be choqued, or staggered at the *Wonderfulness* of these Articles, or think them incredible on that account. To which we may add, that as the History of a *Fall* is made the Foundation of our Religion, so it is no small Step towards the Belief of it, to be convinced from Reason, as we are, that there must have been such an Event; for this shows us that the Foundation on which it is built, is certainly true. And as for what we are taught to believe the Divine Being to have performed in order to our Salvation, if the Attributes of Infinite Justice, and Goodness, and the whole Case be considered, we shall see sufficient Reason to believe it: For the Occasion and Foundation of the Incarnation of the Son of God, seems naturally, and necessarily to be laid, in the unquestionably essential Attributes of God;
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for God cannot but be Just, and cannot but be Merciful, and Good ; it was certainly therefore necessary, on supposition of such an Event as the Fall, (which is so demonstratively confirmed by what we experience in our selves,) that some such Method as this should be taken to reconcile these two Attributes ; now tho' the Method the Christian Religion declares this adorable Being to have made choice of for this purpose, be wonderful in our Eyes, and speaks the most infinite Condescension, and Mercy, yet it is certainly by so much the worthier of Him, and would have been utterly unworthy of Him if it had not. It is true indeed, it would have been impossible for us to have thought of any such thing, but that is nothing to the Purpose ; not only because his Thoughts are above our Thoughts, but also, because it is as impossible for us to think how it could have been done otherwise ; and therefore *this* is no harder to be imagined, than *that*. Wherefore, there is nothing in the Christian Belief that can truly, and justly be said to be actually incredible, if there be any good Grounds to think it revealed.

Let us now in like manner examine the Creed of the *Deists* ; in which I am persuaded we shall find many Things incredible. First, then, it is utterly incredible that a
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Being of infinite Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power, and Holiness, has either created Mankind in their present Condition, or should wholly neglect them in it, however it was brought upon them. As for the former part of the Assertion; — Whether we consider the Body, or Mind, we shall find them in such wretched Circumstances, that it is impossible such a Work should ever have come out of the Hands of a Being of infinite Perfections. As for the Body, it seems forwarder from the beginning to tend to Corruption, and Destruction, than to continue in its present State, or improve. As for the Mind, its Faculties are weak, encumbered, and apt to run into continual Disorder, thro' the Irregularity of the Appetites, or Passions; and what is yet worse, the Will is naturally more inclinable to Evil than Good. * — Is it possible to think, that an infinitely good, and wise, and powerful Agent would have left his Work thus? Would it not have been an abhorrence to Him?

* If there be any Necessity to prove this, I appeal to the Universal Experience of Mankind, whether they have not always observed it to be thus in Children, and even in themselves when adult, in many Particulars; notwithstanding all the Care that has been taken to give their Minds a different Turn. I think likewise, that it may serve as a Proof of this Point, that Wickedness, and Injustice abounds so much more in the World than Virtue, and Justice.

Him? Would He not sooner have thrown it away, or destroyed it? Would even a skilful Clock-maker, or Ship-wright, suffer a Clock, or a Ship, to go out of their Hands that was not as perfect as their Art could make it? They would not. Much less then can we imagine the All-wise, and All-powerful Creator to have made Man in his present Condition. No, He certainly created Man in such Perfection as belonged to our Nature. He could have taken no Delight in his Work if it had been otherwise. But perhaps it will be said, we were created in our present Condition, as in a State of Probation. I reply, that the Creator could have found other Ways enough for our Probation; and that his infinite Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power, could never have been satisfied in such a Creation. And I leave it to the Decision of Reason, whether it is probable it could. Adding only, that in my Judgement, the present miserable Imperfection of Man, seems as evidently to declare, that human Nature has undergone some Alteration, and is, by some means or other, fallen from the Perfection of its original State, as the visible Scar of a Cut, or a Burn, speaks the Body to have suffered by one of those Accidents. I think I may conclude therefore, that some Alteration, or Change, has been made in our Nature. But how? Or, why?

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Or, by whom? We know not,—according to their System. — But is it not incredible, that a Being of infinite Goodness, should not think himself concerned to acquaint us with this, when we had utterly lost the Knowledge thereof? Might we not naturally expect this from Him, if it were only to clear his Power from any Question, and his Goodness, and Holiness, from any Imputation, by showing us that the Evilness, and Misery we complain of, proceeds not from *Him*, but from something else, or rather, from ourselves? For had it been the Effect of Violence, or Hostility, his Goodness, and Power, would either have preserved us from it, or at least have repaired the Hurt we had received; we may be sure therefore, that it was some how, or other occasioned by ourselves; That is, was either the natural, and immediate Consequence of some Action of the Parents from whom we derive our Birth, or was inflicted by our Creator in his Displeasure, as a Punishment for some Fault committed by them. And I think we may be equally sure, that a Being of infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, and Justice, would not suffer the Knowledge thereof to be wholly lost from the Earth, but would preserve some Memory of the Matter, as a Vindication of his own Goodness, and Justice, in the case. I am bold to say, that it is utterly incredible
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that He should not, whatever was the Occasion; that a Being of infinite Goodness should so wholly reject the wretched Race of Mankind, as not to let them know this, for the Justification of his own Honour, and for our Condemnation. I dare affirm, that as the Misery to which we are subject, is certainly an Effect of his Displeasure, and Wrath, we may even in Justice expect to be informed how the Race of Mankind has deserved so great Displeasure; for every one who is punished, has naturally a Title to know for what Reason. But, why, it will be objected, may not his Goodness, and Justice, and the Vindication of these Attributes, as well suffer the Divine Being to leave *all* Mankind in Ignorance thereof, as so *great a Part* of the Species, as, by our own Supposition, have been neglected in this manner? — For a very good Reason. To wit, because the former is utterly inconsistent with these Attributes, but the latter not at all; for, on this Hypothesis, undoubted Monuments of this Event were left in our Hands, which it is to be supposed all were once acquainted with; from whence we argue, that if any of them, by corrupting themselves, and the Truth, lost the Knowledge thereof, it was their own Fault; nor could it be any Reflection on the Divine Goodness, to let them continue in an Ignorance which was

the Effect of their own Wickedness and Self-corruption ; especially since he had taken care, that the Knowledge thereof should be preserved by a People whom he had chosen for that purpose, from whom the rest might have recovered it, if they had been desirous of finding it ; and more particularly, since He always intended, at the Time appointed by his Wisdom for sending his Son into the World, to bring *all* Men to the Knowledge thereof, and of the Remedy for it which his Goodness had prepared. By which I take the Objection to be sufficiently answered. To proceed then ; — To me also it seems incredible, that a Being of infinite Goodness, whatever Displeasure He may have conceived against Man, yet, considering us as miserable, not originally by any immediate Fault of our own, but by the very Circumstances of our Birth, should not have so much Compassion upon Mankind, as to endeavour to reduce them from their Errors, and bring them to the Knowledge of the Truth. — It is plain by all accounts, that we have erred from the Beginning, and probable, for many Reasons, that we shall err to the End. Can his Goodness behold this our Blindness without Pity ? Do not we pity a Bird that is lame ? or a Dog that halts ? — Is He less Compassionate and Merciful than us ? or the Blindness of Mankind a Spectacle less

less deserving Commiseration than these?—
*But it is their own Fault ; — Have they not
 the Faculty of Reason ? — Wherefore do they
 not use it ? —* They are endowed with Reason,
 and ought to consult it, and are highly
 to blame for not performing it with more
 Diligence and Care ; but still, I say, they
 are to be pitied, if it be considered under
 what Prejudices Men are Educated, and that
 the Children inherit the Errors of their Fore-
 fathers ; and much more, if it appears that
 some of their Errors, (*if Errors,*) have such
 a Similitude of Truth, that no human En-
 deavours can discover them to be such.
 Which might have been said of the *Jewish*
 Religion, while it lasted ; and may at pre-
 sent be as truly affirmed of *Christianity*. Let
 these two Particulars be sufficiently weigh-
 ed, and I say it is incredible, that a Being of
 infinite Goodness, should suffer Mankind to
 continue under such a multiplicity of Delu-
 sions, without any Endeavour, or Inclinati-
 on to bring them to the Knowledge of
 the Truth. That He should look on uncon-
 cerned, and suffer them to be deceived, and
 drawn in, by Impostures which counterfeit
 the Truth so well, that it is impossible they
 should be able to discover the Cheat, or ex-
 tricate themselves by any Efforts of their
 own. It is incredible that He should have
 so little Concern for Mankind, whom He
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has made, or for Truth, which He loves, as to be contented to behold them all err, but a very small Number; to be contented that Falsehood should be every where triumphant, while Truth is ashamed to show its Face; that Falsehood should have as many Millions of Disciples, as Truth has single Persons that profess it; * that every Imposture, even the vilest, and most extravagant, should have a large number of Places appointed for its false Worship, and the Truth have not one upon the Earth. It is incredible, I say, that

* If it be answered, that even upon our own Supposition, Falsehood has a greater Number of Followers, than the Truth; I acknowledge it to be so, but urge this Corruption also to be a manifest Proof of some Depravation of our original Condition; which, I say, could never have been created so inclinable to Error, by a Being who delights in nothing but Truth. As for the natural Perverseness of the *Hyle*, or *Matter*, it was an Hypothesis invented by the *Platonists* to salve the Difficulties we have been speaking of, but is highly unphilosophical; because this either falsely supposes Matter to have a Property, which it has not from God, (and which to imagine Him not inclinable, or not able to remove, is the same thing, as to set bounds to his infinite Goodness, and Power) or else to have been created so defective, which is derogatory to his Power, and neither consistent with his infinite Wisdom, Perfection, or Goodness. I reply also, that still Truth, on our Hypothesis, has a large Number of Professors; it dares show its Head, and maintain its own Cause; and that Falsehood is not able to stand against it, if brought to the Trial; which is a very different Case from that of *Deism*, if it were the Truth. For it has no competent Number of Disciples, and is not able to answer, much less to confound Christianity, which it charges with Falsehood.

that a Being who is a Lover of Truth should permit it to be so. — *But why,* it may be asked again, *might not his Goodness leave all Mankind to shift for themselves, as well as so great a Part of the Species, as by our own Supposition always were, and still are left in such a Condition?* — Because, (as I answered just now in a like Case) the latter is entirely consistent with his Goodness, whereas the former can by no means be reconciled thereto. The latter part of this Proposition has already been proved. The former Branch of it, may be evinced by reminding the Querist, that when God originally revealed his Will, it was equally known to all, but that they, or their Children, corrupted the Truth which they had been taught, and set up their own Imaginations in its place; which notwithstanding, the Divine Goodness endeavoured to reclaim them by Messages sent by good Men; (which we read in particular of *Enoch*, and *Noah*;) when this would not prevail on them to forsake their Corruptions, and Iniquities, He brought a Deluge of Waters on the World, to destroy that abominable Race, and wash the Earth from the Pollutions with which they had defiled it. Then again, all that were left sufficiently knew Him, and his Will, (whether from those Precepts, or not, which the *Jews* yet preserve the Memory of,

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as delivered to *Noah*, I shall not stay to enquire.) When these also had corrupted their Ways, and turned from the Truth to their own Imaginations, and were not to be reclaimed; the Longanimity of the Divine Goodness would not sweep away Mankind by another general Destruction, but leaving them to their own Inventions, reserved to Himself, (as it were one Grape from the Cluster) one favourite Man more Excellent than the rest, whose Posterity He took for his chosen People, who might still preserve the Truth upon Earth, and be Witnesses thereof to the rest of the World; whom, as a Proof of his Existence, and the Truth of their Religion, He perpetually protected by great, and evident Miracles, as long as they continued to worship Him only, and were strict in the Observance of his Laws. What now is there in this Proceeding that is any way inconsistent with the most infinite Goodness? Especially if it be remembered, that notwithstanding the Corruptions, and Abominations of the *Gentiles*, his infinite Mercy had not wholly rejected even the rest of Mankind, but raised up wise Men among them to prevent their being reduced to a Savage Barbarity, and always designed to have mercy on *them* also, and reduce them to the Knowledge of the Truth, when the Saviour, whom Men had been taught to expect, had offered

offered up a Sacrifice of Atonement for the Sins of the World, and procured a Reconciliation for them ; and that then he extended his Goodness to all Nations, and sent his Messengers among them to recall them to the Knowledge of Himself, and to offer them Salvation thro' the Merits of his Christ. There is a vast Difference therefore between the Two Systems ; One supposes Him to behold all Mankind from the beginning to the end, losing themselves in various Walks of Error, and Falsehood, a very few excepted ; of which few, scarce one in an Age has Courage enough openly to profess, and maintain what he thinks to be the Truth ; and if any one goes thus far, still they find themselves ignorant of many necessary Truths ; as, whence Evil, Misery, Death ; what Form of publick Worship is to be established ; what Hope of Pardon after great, and wilful Transgressions ; to which we may add, that the Christians maintain their Cause so well, and with such specious Arguments, that the Truth (if it be the Truth) staggers, and is almost over-powered by them ; (the Christians at least think the Advantage on their side.) So that on this Supposition, there is nothing almost but Darkness, and Error upon the Earth ; Falsehood every where triumphant, and Truth forced to hide its head ; Truth silenced, and Falsehood sing-

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ing Victory; — And all this, the infinitely good Creator, (according to this System) beholds, and has beheld from the Beginning, without ever asserting the Cause of Truth, or pitying the Errors of his Creatures so far, as to use any Endeavours to reduce, and reclaim them. (For sure the weak, and rare Efforts of the Few who have appeared Advocates for natural Religion, whose Objections against Christianity have been so often, and so well answered; who have so little to reply to the Arguments urged in defence of this Religion, and whose System is clogged with so many incredible Circumstances as has above been observed; — sure such baffled, ineffectual Efforts as these, I say, cannot be looked upon, or esteemed as sufficient Endeavours of this kind:) Whereas, on the other side, how different is the Conduct of our Creator, according to the Christian account? According to this, his Will, and every Thing necessary to be known, has been revealed from the Beginning; His Mercy has continually strove with the Corruptions of Mankind; the Original of which Corruptions, He himself has informed us of, when the whole Earth had perverted their Ways, and the Truth. He has always made choice of new, and proper Methods of preserving it, and bearing witness thereto; and at the last, in the Fulness of Time, sent

sent his Son to redeem us, and convert all Nations from their Errors, and Abominations, to the Knowledge of the Truth. Consider now God, as He is a Being of infinite Holiness, and Justice, and what could Divine Goodness have done more, than it has? So that the Case is as different as possible; One Scheme supposes Him to have performed all that could be expected from the most infinite Goodness; the other, to express such Disregard for his Creatures, as is hardly consistent with the least Degree of Beneficence; on one Side there are no difficulties but what may be readily, and satisfactorily answered; on the other, to reconcile the Conduct of the Supream Being to infinite Goodness, seems to me an insuperable Task. — If it be asked, why the Divine Goodness has not brought a greater Part of Mankind to the Knowledge of the Truth? Or, why it has permitted *Mahometism* to encrease, and overrun the true Religion in so many Places? — I answer to the first Query. That as all are undoubtedly in some degree, benefitted by the Death of the Saviour of Mankind; so his Goodness, satisfied with the Mercy of this Act, is certainly at Liberty to call *whom*, and *when* He pleases, as his Wisdom perceives them to be fit, and prepared. To which I may add, that the Truth has, at one time or other, been preached in all Places, if they

rejected it at first, or extinguished it afterwards, *He* may justly, and without any Reflection upon his Goodness, leave them to their own Imaginations. — To the second Query concerning *Mahometism*, I answer: That the Rise and Growth of this Sect was permitted by Divine Providence, partly as a Punishment to the Nations where it began, for not having embraced the Truth which was among them; and partly to punish the Wickedness of the *Christians*, whose Corruptions, and Divisions deserved such a Scourge. In short, if the whole Method of God's Proceeding with Mankind, as set forth by the Scriptures of the Old, and New Testament, be impartially examined by the perfectest Reason, I am satisfied it will be found not only entirely consistent with infinite Goodness, but every way worthy thereof, and adequate thereto. Whereas I profess as before, I am not able to see, how the Conduct of this adorable Being, according to the *Deist* Supposition, can possibly be reconciled with this Attribute. There seem to me to be so many Circumstances in our Condition that are inconsistent therewith, that for this very Reason their System appears incredible to me. Especially when I reflect likewise how many incredible Particulars they are also obliged to subscribe, in consequence of their Belief that the Christian

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Religion is an Imposture. Which, (because I think the Reader must needs have observed them) I shall mention as briefly as I can. Indeed all their Belief concerning it, (recited above) is nothing but a Heap of incredible Positions. — It is incredible, for the Reasons there hinted, that the Apostles stole the Body of their Master, according to the Assertion of the *Jews*, and Supposition of the *Deists*. — Incredible, that they would have gone thro' such Labours, and Hazards, in attempting to bring the World to believe such a Story, had they not been commissioned by God for the Work, and assuredly depended on his Assistance, and Protection. — Incredible, that so extravagant a Design could have entered into their Thoughts. — Incredible, even if this could be believed, that they should all resolve to go thro' with their Fiction against such Opposition, as they did, that they should prefer it to Life itself, and maintain it with such Firmness under the very Agonies of Death. — Incredible, that so strange, and unheard of a Doctrine, whose Precepts are so contrary to the Inclinations of Flesh and Blood, should proselyte such Numbers as it did, and work in them such Conviction, that they likewise should be ready to die for the Profession of it, if they had not beheld the first Preachers thereof endowed with such Powers, as were convincing

vincing Testimonials of their being sent on this Message by God. — Incredible, that such an Imposture, as they would suppose it, teaching such wonderful Doctrines, should triumph over all possible Endeavours to suppress it in ten fierce Persecutions, and spread itself over the whole Earth, and entirely abolish Idolatry which had been so long established, and all this, without using any Resistance towards its Persecutors, or Force on its Converts ; it is incredible, I say, to think this could have happened, if it had not been supported by the Divine Concurrence, and Blessing. — It is incredible also, that such vile Wretches, as they must have been, supposing them Impostors, would have chosen, and taken such Pains to establish such a Religion as this, which promotes all Godliness and Virtue, and carries them to the greatest Perfection ; and which they could not but perceive would be the more difficultly embraced for thwarting Men's natural Inclinations, and Propensities, so much as it does ; an Article which, I fear, makes one of the most considerable Objections against it to this very Day ! — All this to me, I say, appears absolutely incredible ; but if any one is not willing to go so far, this, I think, must be granted at least, that if the two Beliefs be compared, the Christian has evidently the Advantage, in point of Credibility.

lity. — If any Man doubts it, let him make the Comparison under the following Heads.

1. Whether it is not more credible, that the Deity did not create Man in his present Condition, as *Christianity* asserts; than that *He* did; as the *Deists* suppose?

2 Whether it is not more credible, that *He* has from the Beginning shown a gracious regard for us, even such a one as is worthy of his infinite Goodness, as *Christianity* declares; than that *He* has wholly left us to our selves, as the *Deists* imagine?

3 Whether the Points which are made the Foundation of the *Christian* Religion; Concerning Man's having fallen from a State of Perfection by his own wilful Transgression; Concerning the Necessity of Satisfaction being made to Divine Justice, for this, and other Transgressions; Concerning the absolute Want of a Mediator; the Existence of a Trinity of Persons in the Divine Nature, and the Probability of the Method which the Gospel asserts the Divine Wisdom to have taken for our Salvation, are not vastly more credible than the Tenets we have rehearsed?

4 Whether it is not more credible on all accounts, that the Preachers of our Religion received it from God, and were divinely com-

commissioned for the Work ; than that they were wicked Impostors, and all that they preached a Fiction of their own ?

As for the three first of these Enquiries, I think the Matter so evident from what has been said, that I shall pass them over as already determined, and speak only of the last, as being that to which the Adversaries of Christianity make the greatest Exception.

Let us enquire then, whether the Articles mentioned, are not vastly more credible than the Creed of the *Deists* ?

And, first, since it is impossible for a discerning Mind to believe, that Man was created in his present Condition, is it not more credible, that this unhappy Change was occasioned by some wilful Transgression of Man ? And that Man was drawn into this Transgression by the Suggestion of some other Creature ? than to ascribe it to any other Cause ? or account for it any other Way ? — It cannot be attributed to any Alteration of the Divine Benevolence, which is subject to no Mutability : It could not be from the open, or secret Hostility of any other Being, nor have proceeded from any Ignorance, or absolute Misfortune of Man ; for in either of these Cases, the Creator in his Goodness, would undoubtedly have repaired

paired the Hurt Man had received. It must therefore, some way, or other, have been occasioned by his own wilful Fault, and Offence ; but how could this be ? When Man, being created in Perfection, could have no Temptation in Himself to sin, or offend ; unless we suppose his Will to be moved, by the Impulse and Instigation of some other Creature, to transgress in some Instance the known Will, or Command of his Creator. So that we are naturally reduced to the Supposition of a Transgression, and a Tempter, according to the Scripture Account. (But how, it may be asked, was it consistent with the Divine Goodness, to permit such Temptation ? Especially if, as the *Christians* suppose, He foreknew the Consequence of it ? We answer that God permitted it, for the exercise of Man's Free-Will, (which Man had been endowed with to no purpose, if Good, and Evil, had not been proposed to him, and left to his own Choice ;) for a Trial of his Obedience, (which could not be grateful but as proceeding from Free-Will ;) and for the Glorification of his own Attributes, which could not be manifested, and exercised in a better manner, or more infinitely, than by thus permitting Evil to be introduced by the Abuse of Free-Will.) — Thus also, *Secondly*, concerning this first, and our following Transgressions ;—Which is more

credible ? That a Being essentially, and infinitely Just, and Holy, and Knowing, who has endowed us with a Faculty of distinguishing between Good, and Evil, should not suffer our Transgressions of this Rule to escape with Impunity, and without any becoming Satisfaction, or Mulct ? Or, that He should over-pass them without Right, or Reason, in Contradiction to his Nature ? For what Reason can be pretended for his so doing ? — That Repentance, in many Cases cannot, is plain. Will they say ? *Because he is good.* Would He for that Reason act contrary to his *Justice*, as Essential an Attribute ? Is it not more credible, that He would if possible (and what is impossible to Him ?) find a way to reconcile them to each other, and satisfy both ? — And is not this the Foundation of *Christianity* ? and this Foundation altogether agreeable to Reason ? For Man's Evilness being evidently owing to himself, it is not likely that an infinitely just Being should suffer it to escape without any Animadversion ; tho', as He is infinitely Good, as well as Just, such Mercy as is agreeable to such Goodness, may reasonably be hoped ; (the Tidings whereof, if we have any Reason to think them attested by *Him*, we need not reject on account of their being infinitely wonderful in our Eyes, but should rather look on it to be on this account
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more likely, and worthy to be the Effect of infinite Goodness. For what can be more credible, than that infinite Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power should work, and do Things infinitely astonishing to us ?) — This Foundation being laid ; I ask again, Which is more credible ? That the Custom of worshipping, and thinking to propitiate the Deity by Sacrifices, and Blood, was an Original, and Divine Institution, to signify this Necessity of Satisfaction for Sin, and that the Life of the Sinner was forfeited by his Transgressions, and could only be redeemed by the Substitution of an equivalent Life, and so to typify that future Sacrifice, which the infinite Goodness of the Son of God determined to offer in due time for the Sins, and Redemption of Man ; — which, I say, is more probable, that this ancient Custom had its Original hence ? Or that so strange, and unlikely, so irrational a manner of Worship was taken up at first, even in the Times when one would have thought there must be least Corruption upon Earth, and continued every where to be practised some Thousands of Years, without any other Ground, or Foundation but unaccountable Fancy ? — I know indeed it may be said, that they had gross Notions of the Deity his being pleased with the Steams of their Offerings, and his feeding with them at their

Sacrifices; but still this does not appear so good an account as the other; for it is neither probable that Men should fall into such gross Conceptions of the Deity from the very Beginning, and so universally embrace them; nor credible, if they had, that nor the Goodness, nor Displeasure of the Deity, should move *Him* to reprove their Misconceptions of *Him*, and better inform them. — Thus also, *Thirdly*, With respect to the Assertion of the absolute Want of a Mediator; Which is more credible? That there is a Necessity for a Mediator between a God of infinite Holiness, and Justice, and such evil and unclean Creatures as Men? Or, that there is not? — What Communication can there be, between the greatest possible Purity, and such Impurity as ours? What Fellowship between perfect Rectitude, and total Iniquity? For my part, I am so sensible of the great and miserable Corruption of my Nature, that I dare not lift up my Eyes as towards so holy, and so pure a Being, but in the humble Confidence of such *Mediation*; much less could I bear the Reflection of appearing before *Him*, and answering for the Government of all my Thoughts, Words, and Actions. Nor can any Man, I am certain. So that the Notion of a Mediator appears to be founded on the absolute, and evident Necessity there is for One. And accordingly the Belief of One, is what Mankind

kind are so naturally inclined to entertain, that many learned Men ascribe the Original of Idolatry to this Sense of our own Vileness, and of the Necessity of a Mediator. Which Method they were the readier to fall into, because of the prophetick Tradition received from their Fathers of such a One to come. Concerning which Tradition ; the Existence of a Trinity of Persons in the Divine Nature, and the Probability of the wonderful Method which the Gospel asserts the Divine Wisdom to have made choice of, to satisfy his Divine Justice, and supply this want of a Mediator ; we leave it likewise to Reason to judge ; which is more credible, — That this Notion of a Mediator with God, for Man, should be a human Invention only ; or taken up of our own Heads ? Or, that it should be a Divine Revelation ? — Men, might indeed from the Consideration of their own Evilness, (which they might have collected to have some way, or other been owing to themselves,) have been sensible in some measure of the want of a Mediator ; but it was not possible for them naturally to have entertained any Expectation of such a One as would effectually answer their Needs. Such an Expectation as this could arise from nothing, but some Assurance thereof which the Divine Goodness had given them. And when we see that there is evidently a Necessity

sity for Satisfaction to be made, and a Mediator to be found, and have so much Reason to think, that the Hopes of such a Mediator have been given us from the Beginning; why should the Method which the Gospel asserts the Divine Goodness and Wisdom to have made choice of for this Purpose, be thought incredible by us, only on account of the amazing Wonderfulness thereof, and of the Revelation which it gives us concerning the Divine Nature? For which is more credible? That God should be wonderfully, and astonishingly good to us? Or, that he should be amazingly, and inconceivably regardless of his Creatures? If God be differently represented; which Representation is most likely to be true? That which sets Him forth as most wonderful in our Eyes, and most above our Comprehension? Or, that which rejects a well-attested Revelation, on this account only? That which most displays, and glorifies his Justice, and Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power? Or, that which is least, if at all, to the Honour of these Attributes? To conclude all in one Question. Is it not more agreeable to Reason, that an infinite Being should appear infinitely above our finite Conception? And that an infinitely wise, and good, and powerful Being should display these his Attributes in a manner that shou'd seem infinitely

nately wonderful to us? Than that he should not display them at all? Or, that He should create, and suffer us to continue in such a Condition, as can by no means be reconciled with what Reason teaches us to follow necessarily from these his Perfections? — In short, I think every Man of Judgement must be sensible from what has been said, that *Christianity* has a far greater Portion of Credibility than *Deism*. The former contains many Things highly credible, nothing incredible; the latter hardly any thing credible but the Existence of a Deity.

C H A P. IV.

I Have now compared the two Beliefs in Point of Credibility, the Result whereof, I hope, will prove, that the *Deists* will be more modest for the future, and not charge *Christianity* with the Incredibility of its Tenets, as they usually do; but not without the greatest Partiality and Blindness, as I think what has been said sufficiently evinces. This Point then we have gained; but this Point alone will hardly be sufficient for *their* Satisfaction, or even for ours. We are convinced indeed, that our Belief is, with regard to its Matter, vast'y more credible than theirs

theirs; but yet we acknowledge it possible, that what appears credible may be false, and what to us may seem less credible, or almost incredible, be nevertheless true, and what a Man would chuse to adhere to, if he saw good and substantial Reasons to incline him to this side, and that the other was supported by very poor Ones, or none. To which we may add, that tho' we discover ever so good Cause to reject their Belief, as utterly incredible, yet it will be nevertheless expected that we should set forth the Reasons upon which ours is founded. For the only Consequence resulting from what has been said, is, That a Man of Understanding would sooner be a *Christian*, than a *Deist*, which notwithstanding, there may be some who may not think they yet see sufficient Reason to make even the *Former* their Faith.

Let us now therefore examine which of the two Beliefs is founded on better, and more satisfactory Reasons. A Question of great weight in deciding their Merits. But be it first observed, that as their Creed contains by far the more incredible Points, so they need have the better Reasons to offer for believing it. Whether they have, or not, will quickly appear.

I begin, first, with the Reasons which the *Christians* give for the Belief of their Religion; which are these. — I. They say, that they

they are convinced that the Divine Goodness has not left Mankind wholly to themselves, and without a Revelation; what convinces them of this, is, their Perception of the absolute Necessity there always was, still is, and always will be, of a Revelation, for the Information, and Direction of Mankind; joined with the Consideration of the infinite Goodness of the Supream Being; who could never, they believe, behold his Creatures under so miserable a Necessity of Information, without affording them all needful Assistance. — That there was such a Necessity, as we speak of, they prove, by representing the wretched Blindness, and Corruption of the whole World, in the Times of Idolatry, which it was morally impossible for human Reason to have conquered, and driven out of the World, on account of the Difficulties it had to encounter from the Prejudices of Education, Example, and the Propensity of the fleshly Appetites to Impurity, and Evil. This, they say, Experience sufficiently confirmed, by the small Progress that Philosophy made in the Work; for what did Mankind know, or practise more in the Days of *Cicero*, than they did in those of *Socrates*? A Period in which Learning continued longer in a flourishing Condition, than it ever did, either before, or since. And yet let any Man read *Tully's Books De Naturâ De-*
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orum, and observe how little Proficiency in the Knowledge of the Deity, and their Obligations, and Duty even Philosophy had made; and I leave him to judge, (whether there was not a Necessity for a Revelation, when *Tully* could put such Words as these in the Mouth of an High-Priest of the *Romans*.

— *Nobis Qui, concedentibus Philosophis Antiquis, Adolescentibus delectamur*; and could let so abominable a Practice escape without any Reproof in his Books of *Offices*. And) when the Result of the Enquiries of so great a Man, whether there was any Divine Nature, or not, was only that the Affirmative seemed to him to be nearer to the Truth; and when in the Pursuit of his Disquisition he does not once correct the vulgar Opinion, and assert the Unity of the Supreme Being; whether for want of Knowledge of this Truth, or of Courage to declare it, I cannot positively say; tho' I rather attribute it to his Ignorance, because the Way of Writing he made choice of, would have permitted any Thing to have been asserted without giving Offence. But of this I am sure, that if Men of so great Parts could not, or would not inform the World better than this, the Errors of Mankind were never like to have been corrected without a Revelation. For in the Ages succeeding, Learning did not improve, but decline. Which shows the absolute

solute Necessity there was for a Revelation, because the World could not otherwise have been reclaimed from their Errors, and brought to the Acknowledgment of the Truth. Which Necessity proved, we assert that we can never be brought to believe, that a Being of infinite Goodness could behold his Creatures under so great Want of Information, without affording it to them; it is contrary to his very Nature that He should, when He could not but perceive, that there was no Hopes of their being reclaimed by any Efforts of their own. — For tho' the Philosophers might indeed possibly have arrived to the Knowledge of the most necessary Truths, if they had applied themselves to the Work with an honest Intention; yet the Multitude, who could not, were real Objects of the Divine Pity. We add also, that if the Philosophers had done all that could possibly be expected, yea, even if they had proceeded as far as the best modern Writers on Natural Religion, which, I fear, would never have been; yet still there had been a Necessity for a Revelation to inform us, — How Man came to be subject to Misery, and Death; and propenser to Evil, than Good; — Whether we may entertain any hope of Pardon, after great and wilful Offences; — What manner of Worship would be agreeable to the Deity; — Still there would have been a Necessity

for the Authority of a Revelation ; before Mankind could have been converted, and a New Religion, and Worship established. We add also, according to what I asserted above, that — Supposing these Things not to be revealed, there is, *even yet, and always will be*, the same Necessity for One, both to inform us of these Points, and to disperse, by its Authority, the Prejudices we have imbibed from the received Religions, which nothing else, it is certain, can be able to do. So that whether there has been any Revelation, or not, we may boldly assert, that there always was, still is, and always will be a Necessity for One. And as we think this Point is evident, so we think we may rest confidently assured, that the infinite Goodness of the Being who made us, would not behold us in this Condition without supplying our Need, and furnishing us with what we so absolutely wanted. We are satisfied therefore, beyond all doubt, that there must be, and is a Revelation. We look upon it to be as certain a Point, as that God is infinitely Good, and Just, from both which Attributes, (as was above observed) it unavoidably follows that there is One. In the Second Place, When certain of finding One, we set our selves to enquire for it ; — We perceive no Religion but Christianity, that can support its Pretensions to such an Original,

nal. — That *Mahometism* is not this Divine Revelation, — Its Want of Attestation, the Character of its Author, the Manner of its Propagation, the Exceptionableness of its Doctrines, the palpable Contradictions, and Mistakes in the *Alcoran*, sufficiently testify. — That the *Jewish* Religion, tho' certainly of Divine Original, (for it is impossible that a whole People should be so imposed upon, as they must have been, supposing the Books of *Moses* to contain a fabulous Account;) yet that this is not, at present, that Revelation which the Supreme Being would have all Men make, in every Instance, the Rule of their Belief, and their Practice, is, I think, evident, — From his having driven them out of their Country, where alone the Ceremonial Part of it can be observed; and from this, that their Sacred Books, and Ceremonies taught them to hope in a Saviour, who must either be come, or their Books be false. But it is evident indeed, that this Religion was only designed to prepare the way for *Christianity*; which, besides its being thus ushered in by a former Revelation, has other sufficient Evidence to convince us of its proceeding from God. As, *First*, The Excellency of its Morality, agreeable to Reason, calculated to raise our Nature to the greatest Dignity, and Perfection, of which it is capable; and in every Point such as
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might be expected from so Good, so Just, and Holy a Being. In short, let a Man consider the Tenour, and Design of the *Christian Covenant*, — and how excellent, how worthy, and becoming reasonable Creatures is such an Engagement? How unlikely is it, that any Thing but the Divine Goodness, and Truth, should engage us in a Contract so Beneficial to the World, and so Honourable to Human Nature? What but the Divine Beneficence, and Compassion, could thus raise us from the Mire of Vice, and Brutality, to live like rational Creatures, and imitate the Sanctity, and Perfection of the Divine Nature? Nothing certainly. Men might as well gather Figs from Thorns, as such universal Virtue be the Product of a most wicked Imposture. What could even the Divine Goodness, and Wisdom have done better for Mankind, than thus to endeavour to introduce the Observation of all Righteousness among them? What might be expected from Him, if this might not? Is it likely then that He would sit still, and see an impious Imposture have the Honour of a Work so worthy of Himself, as the Engaging his Creatures in a Covenant to practise all Virtue, and aim at Perfection? No; a Work so worthy the Divine Goodness and Wisdom, cannot reasonably be imagined to have any other Author, but God. A second
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Article which helps to confirm our assurance of its being a Divine Revelation, is, the Agreeableness of its Doctrines to what the Deductions of Reason might teach us; and their being so well adapted to answer our Wants. Giving us an Account of that Alteration in our Nature which has certainly happened, tho' the Occasion thereof could now never have been known without a Revelation. Showing us, whence our Misery, Mortality, and Propensity to Evil; why the Days of Man are so contracted, and short; (whence the greater Pains of the Woman, than of other Females in bringing forth her Young;) and by that means clearing the Divine Goodness, and Wisdom, and making those Things plain, which before were inexplicable. —Representing the Supream Being to us such as our Reason assures Him to be, 1. Infinitely wonderful and above our Comprehension. 2. Infinitely Just, so as by no means to let Sin escape with Impunity. 3. Infinitely Wise, and Good, so as to have been able to reconcile the Attributes of Justice, and Goodness, and to have shewn infinite Mercy to his Creatures, notwithstanding their seeming Opposition. A Description that is perfectly worthy of God! — Teaching us, (what Experience will always confirm) our own Weakness, and Inability to do good of our selves; and offering

fering us the internal Assistance of Supernatural Grace. Setting forth to us the Necessity there is of a Mediator between so pure and holy a Being, as God, and such perverse, and evil, and unclean Creatures, as Men. Causing us to expect a Day of Judgement, which, as Justice is an unquestionable Attribute of the Supream Being, and as He has endowed us with the Faculty of Reason, and made us capable of distinguishing between Good, and Evil, and of giving an Account of our Actions, we have so good Grounds to depend on. Assuring us even of a Restoration, and Resurrection of our Bodies; which also is reasonably to be expected from the Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power of God. For is it not reasonable to think, that the Supream Being will restore his damaged Work to its original Integrity, and Perfection, unless He has wholly rejected it, as a broken Vessel?—Which would neither be consistent with his Goodness, or Wisdom. For would any of us throw away a beautiful Piece of Workmanship, made by us for our Pleasure, and accidentally damaged, if we could repair it with Ease? No, certainly; it is only because we cannot restore it to Perfection, if we cast it away. But He can repair the Hurt we have received, without any Trouble or Uneasiness to Himself; and therefore it is reasonable to expect, that as his
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Power, and Wisdom furnish Him with Ability, so his Goodness, and Pity would incline Him to perform it. (But that this should be done for free, and rational Creatures, with such a previous Trial of their Free-will, and such a Discrimination as the Gospel declares, is perfectly agreeable to his Wisdom, and Justice ; for it would be not only absurd, but even unjust, to endow Creatures with Liberty of Will, and then hinder, by his Influence, the Exercise of it. As for the Difficulty of conceiving, how it was consistent with infinite Goodness to endow us with Liberty of Will, when He foreknew so many of us would abuse it to our eternal Destruction ; It lies not against Christianity in particular, but against Free-Will itself, and would have been the same it is now, if Christianity had never been heard of ;—supposing only, a Supream Being, who has made us capable of giving an Account of our Actions, and will require it of us. Which are all undoubted Articles of Natural Religion.— This Difficulty therefore must be solved, by showing that Man, void of Liberty, would have been a Creature utterly unworthy of the Divine Wisdom ; a Creature in which the Creator could have taken no Pleasure, which could have had nothing of Merit, or Honour, nothing of Self-consciousness, Self-complacency, or the Sa-

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tisfaction that arises from the Enjoyment of our Will ; in short, Men must have been as Puppets, moved by something without them, if they had not been endowed with Liberty of Choice ; which Liberty had been to no purpose, if Good, and Evil had not been set before them, and left to their Election. Without Free-Will, therefore, and its Exercise, created Life would not have been an Effect any ways agreeable to the Wisdom of God. And, as for his Goodness, — It is satisfied. 1. By perceiving the Fitness and Necessity of the Thing. 2. By knowing that Life, and Death, are both set before them, and their Misery entirely their own Deed, and Option. 3. By being even infinitely displayed in order to invite all Creatures to be happy. And, 4. By the Delight it takes in the Glorification of those who embrace it, in beholding them infinitely happier, and all the Divine Attributes infinitely more glorified by the Admission of Free-Will.) But, why, it may be asked, should the Soul be reunited to the Body, when most Writers are of Opinion, that it can exert itself better without it? — I positively deny, in opposition to the late Mr. *Woolaston*, and all others of that Opinion, that the Soul (of its own Nature,) can exert itself better when separate from the Body. If it could, — I affirm, that the All-wise Creator would never

ver have employed so much Wisdom, and Art, in contriving a Body for it, and uniting it thereto. No ; — the Soul was undoubtedly made as much for the Body, as the Body for the Soul ; that is, they were undoubtedly made to fit, and depend on each other ; or how would it have been consistent with Divine Wisdom to unite them ? So that the Soul may be rightly defined, to be a Spiritual Substance created on purpose to animate, and be united to a System of Matter, and which, consequently, acts then with the greatest Activity, and Vigour, when, according to the Intention of its Creation, it is united to a *suitable* System of Matter. If then it is highly probable, as I have said, that the infinite Goodness of the Creator would incline Him to restore his damaged Work to its original Perfection, in as many as would lay hold on the Offer of Salvation ; it must be done, as Christianity teaches us to expect, by reuniting the Soul, and Body, and rectifying the Damage which either may have sustained. But, wherefore, it may yet be enquired, if the best State of the Soul is such a Union with the Body, is the Soul at all separated from it by Death, and the Body reduced to Dust ? Especially when we assert the Price of its Redemption from Death to be paid ? Would it not be a readier Way to repair the Damage our

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Souls, and Bodies have received, without such previous Separation, and such a Dissolution of the latter? — I reply, that our Death, and the Dissolution of our Bodies, was indispensably due to the Divine Justice, and Truth, which had ordained, and denounced, that Man should die, and return to Dust, if He transgressed ; which Sentence being perfectly just, it was inconsistent with his Eternal Justice and Truth, to alter what He had pronounced. * Tho' in his Goodness, and Wisdom, He appointed us a Deliverer to pay our Ransom to his Justice, and redeem our Bodies from the Bonds of Death, and from the Destruction of the Grave. To which may be added, that the Divine Wisdom might also approve of this Method ; as being more uniform, — the necessary Change being by this Method wrought in all Men at once ; as suiting better with the
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* I foresee but one Objection to this Reason for the Necessity of our dying ; which arises from these Words of St. Paul, *That we shall not all die but be changed.* Which Difficulty may be removed, by observing, That this Change may be wrought in us by an instantaneous Separation of the Soul, and Body, upon which the Body is Dust, and may yet farther undergo such an Alteration, as will answer more exactly to the Terms of our Sentence. That this Change will amount to the same Thing, as if they were to die and be leisurely reduced to Dust, may also be collected from those Expressions of the same Writer, — *In Adam all died ; — It is appointed to all Men once to die ; Death passed upon all, &c.* Which could not be true, unless to be thus changed were equivalent to Death,

Trial it is fit we should undergo, and with the exercise of our Faith, than if we were to see Men after some Years of Probation changed, and translated, as *Enoch*, or *Elijah*; and as affording an Opportunity for a more glorious Display of his infinite Power.—After which Redemption of our Bodies, and their Re-union to our Souls, Christianity then sets before us, either such Happiness, as it becomes infinite Goodness to bestow on Creatures with whom it is pleased; or such Misery, as is suitable to be inflicted by an infinitely just Being, on Creatures who were not to be reclaimed by the most infinite Goodness, which is perfectly agreeable to our natural Notions of the Divine Justice and Goodness. In short, It has all the internal Marks of a Revelation, that can be desired; — It is every way such, as might be expected from the Deity; —It enjoins all manner of Perfection in its Precepts;—It is infinitely above our Comprehension in its Representation of the Divine Nature, and Works, as any true Representation of these Things must necessarily be; — It is in every thing conformable to our natural Idea of the Divine Attributes, representing the Deity infinitely Just, and Good from the Beginning to the End;— It is perfectly agreeable to the Light of Reason in all its Declarations concerning our
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selves ; — It informs our Ignorance with all necessary Knowledge ; answers all our rational Needs ; satisfies all our rational Desires ; — Is greatly to the Glory of God, and to the Comfort, and Joy, and Benefit of Mankind ; being the only Light we have in this melancholy Vale of the Shadow of Death, shining on us from above, to illuminate our Darkness, and discover to us the Prospect of Life, and Happiness everlasting. All which might reasonably be expected in a Divine Revelation, and more could not ; what internal Evidence then is wanting to incline us to believe it ? — Proceed we now to external. A third Thing then which adds to our Assurance of the Truth of this Religion, is, that the Coming, and Character of its blessed Author, was foretold by prophetick Predictions from the Beginning of the World. The Divine Wisdom thinking it proper in his Goodness, both to afford us some Comfort in the Hopes of a Redeemer, and also to make this Provision against the Incredulity of Mankind, many of whom were not likely to credit so wonderful a Work, even tho' the Purpose of it was thus declared before-hand. A fourth good Evidence of its proceeding from God, is, that when its Author appeared in the World, all these Prophecies were manifestly fulfilled, by his Birth, Life, and Death, especially that of his

his working great Miracles, which was an unexceptionable Proof of his having a Commission from God. A fifth is, that He Himself left several considerable Predictions with his Disciples, concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the Temple, the Growth, and Encrease of his Religion, and other Particulars. The Completion whereof now accomplished, is an additional Proof that He was really a Person divinely commissioned. A sixth, is, that He rose again from the Dead, and bestowed miraculous Gifts, and Powers, on his Disciples, in order to qualify them for so great a Work, as the Conversion of the World. A seventh, is, the publick Testimony of these Persons every where published without any temporal View, and with continual Hazard of their Lives, and sealed at last with their Blood. An eighth, is, The astonishing Success with which *such* a Doctrine, so far above our Reason, and so contrary to Flesh, and Blood, was propagated all over the World; and that even when all imaginable Obstacles opposed themselves to its Progress, and no one earthly Consideration appeared in its Favour. Which amounts to a strong Presumption, that it was countenanced by the Divine Patronage, and supported by the irresistible Power of God; or how was it possible, for *such* a Religion, so weak and contemptible in its Original,

ginal, to surmount *such* Opposition? From the united Force of which Proofs, the Christians are satisfied that the Truth of their Religion may be safely concluded, because we may rest assured, that the Divine Goodness would never suffer an Imposture to come so well recommended; for this would be to permit us to be exposed to unavoidable Delusion, which cannot be imagined concerning a Being of so great Goodness, and Truth. In short, the Arguments for Christianity amount, in sum, to this. 1. That we may be sure a Being of infinite Goodness, would afford some Assistance and Information to Creatures in our Condition. 2. That the Christian Religion is every way worthy to have proceeded from God, and is over and above all this, attended with several other good Proofs, to assure us thereof. And, 3. That we may be certain that the Goodness of God would not suffer an Imposture to bring such Authorities as these for the Deception of Mankind. — So that the Christians look upon the Foundation of their Faith, to be as sure, as the Divine Goodness on which it is built. These are the Reasons assigned by the Christians for the Belief of their Religion; which to me, I protest, seem good, solid, and satisfactory; and such, I believe, they will appear to all who consider, and weigh them maturely.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

LET us now enquire what Reasons the *Deists* have to offer, for believing as they do, that we may see which Side has the best Arguments to produce for the Support of their Cause. And here, we find upon enquiry, that they have not one Reason for the Belief of their own System, but that they presumptuously think all other Systems false, and then their own, must of Consequence be true. It is impossible indeed they should have any other Grounds for the Belief of it; for they pretend not to Revelation; and tho' they talk of following Reason, yet their System is the most inconsistent with Reason of any. It can by no means be reconciled with what Reason clearly discovers concerning the Divine Attributes. The only Thing therefore which they have to say, in defence of it, that has any Appearance of Reason, are their Objections against the Religions which take upon them to be Divine Revelations. Their Objections against the rest we acknowledge to be unanswerable; but whether those they make against Christianity are sufficient to invalidate the Evidence alledged, we are willing to leave to be determined by Reason. First,
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Then, they will not credit the Report of the Miracles which *Jesus* is said to have wrought.

—We answer, That they are not only confirmed by the Testimony of the Apostles, unexceptionable Witnesses, who evidently had no temporal Interest to serve, and sealed the Truth with their Blood; that is, gave as great Proofs of Sincerity, as Men could possibly give; but also, that the Matter of Fact was so certain, and notorious, that none either of the *Jews*, or the *Gentiles*, presumed to deny it; but instead thereof, ascribed his Miracles to other Causes than the Finger of God. Which is easily confuted, by showing that some of them, particularly Raising the Dead, exceeded the Power of any created Agent. And that, even with relation to the others, it cannot be imagined that a God of infinite Goodness, and Truth, would permit Mankind to be thus drawn into a false Belief, and Religion, by the Juggles, or Power of evil Spirits. And good ones cannot be supposed to be employed but according to his Will. But Secondly, They not only refuse to believe, that *Jesus* wrought Miracles, as the Apostles declare, but they also deny Miracles to have been a proper and satisfactory Proof of his Mission; and assert, that it might have been expected that the Deity should have afforded us some more open, and convincing Attestation thereof.

of. In answer to which, and to show Miracles to have been a proper, and satisfactory Proof, we give two good Reasons, why God would not make choice of a more marvellous, and publick Method of giving Testimony to the Christian Religion, than the miraculous Works of Jesus, and his Apostles.

1. Because these were manifestly a sufficient Attestation of his approving it; for no Man could have done the Works that they did, unless God had been with him. And, 2. Because any more astonishing Method would have been to terrifie, not invite Men into the Christian Religion, and not have left Mankind Room enough for Liberty of Choice; whereas the Method of God with Man, is, to set before us Motives sufficient to determine the Assent of a reasonable Creature, and then to leave us to our natural Liberty, of chusing to embrace his Proposal, or not; and it is certainly the only Way of dealing with free Creatures. — *But would not a more marvellous, or publick Method have proved more effectual for the Confirmation of the Faith of succeeding Ages?* No, not at all. Because, we could not have received that better attested, than we have the present Evidence, and therefore whoever questions the Truth of this, might equally have doubted the Certainty of that; and consequently would have been as incredulous as he is now. What

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could have been more publick than the Miracles in *Agypt*? What more awful, and terrible than the Delivery of the *Jewish* Law? And yet, in a few Centuries, the Apostate *Jews* made as slight of the Report of these Proofs, as our modern Unbelievers do now of the Evidence of Christianity. And this we reply to their Objections against the Reality, and Evidence of Miracles. 2. One while they say, there is nothing at all in the Predictions on which we lay so great a Stress; and that the Authors of them were only Pretenders to Inspiration. At other Times, without touching on the Character of the Authors, they deny that the Passages cited have any relation to Jesus, as the Christians apply them. As for the first Assertion, —Our Enemies, the *Jews*, will be Witnesses for the Truth, and Veracity of their Prophets; but as perhaps even their Evidence will not be sufficient, let us ask them, how it was possible, that such Books as those of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*, pretending to be written, the greatest part of them, before the Captivity, and to have been publickly read, and known, should be imposed on the *Jews*, after their Return, (as they must have been, supposing them Forgeries,) so, that a whole Nation should retain them in such sacred Veneration, and Esteem? When, on this Supposition, there were those
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living who could easily have disproved the whole. Let them try if they can make us, or any other Nation, receive Books, in this manner, as Sacred, without any Foundation. To which we may add the evident, and unexceptionable Completion of several of their Prophecies in the Destruction of great Cities, and Subversion of powerful Kingdoms. I instance in *Babylon*, of which it is impossible to give a livelier Description at this Day, than in the Words of the Prediction published so long before. In short, whoever considers the matter, will find it to be absurd to suppose them any other, than such as they pretend.—As for the other Assertion, which maintains that the Passages cited are falsely applied, and had no Relation to *Jesus*. We answer. That the Places contested are manifestly such as might *possibly* have a view to the Events mentioned by these Writers, as well as to the Transactions of the Time when they were published. As for instance; when the Prophet *Jeremiah* wrote that Passage, *In Ramah was there a Voice heard, &c*. It is certainly *possible*, that *the Spirit* might not only intend to express the Afflictions of *Israel* at that Time, but foreseeing a Slaughter of Infants which was to happen many Years after in *Ramah*, on so extraordinary an Occasion, might in these Expressions (as a Testimony of his Foreknowledge,)

knowledge,) have a farther respect to this Massacre also; and that such an Application of it, is so far from any Absurdity, that any Jew who had been Eye-witness of this Slaughter of the Children, and had remembered the Expression, and that *Rachel* was buried in *Bethlehem*, — knowing Him to be a prophetick Writer, might naturally enough have applied it in the same manner as the *Evangelist*, and been induced to think, that the Spirit had this Massacre likewise in view at that Time. The same may be said of all the Places disputed. The only Question then is, Whether *the Spirit*, by whom the Prophet was inspired, intended it thus, or not? — Jesus, and his Disciples maintain the Affirmative. Mr. such a one disputes it. Which of the Two is most likely to be acquainted with the Intention of the Spirit? — Jesus, and his Disciples, to whom the Spirit bare Testimony by numerous Miracles? Or, Mr. such a one, a Man in whom we discover nothing superior to our selves? — And this we think sufficient to reply to their idle Cavils at the Application of Places out of the Prophetick Writings. They likewise reject the Account of the Resurrection of Jesus, and think his Body to have been conveyed away by his Disciples, and the Story of his being risen to be a Fiction of theirs. But how improbable this is, and how little Reason there

is for any such Suspicion, has been shown both heretofore, and of late, with unanswerable Strength of Reason, and Evidence. Some also have endeavoured to weaken our Belief of these Points, by turning the whole Account into execrable Raillery, under pretence of giving the whole an Allegorical Sense. Concerning whose Blasphemies it may be sufficient to observe. 1. That any thing is equally subject to Ridicule, whether it be true, or false; of which we may convince our selves, by supposing it to be true, (which may be done of any thing, if the Supposition of its Truth, implies not a Contradiction :) And you will find that it will still be exposed to as much Raillery from a Person who disbelieves it, as if it were wholly a Falsehood. 2. That there is nothing in Nature so Sacred, and Excellent, but it may be made the Subject of blasphemous Raillery. In so much that every wicked Mind has it in his Power to blaspheme the Deity Himself, and turn every one of his adorable Attributes into Ridicule, as the *Epicureans* did his Omnipresence, and Providence, and, as they had occasion, the rest, to be sure. And yet, I hope, no Man who makes any pretence to Reason, will think, either these Things, or Christianity, the less true, or certain, for being thus impiously attacked. — They refuse likewise to be-

believe that the Apostles were endowed with miraculous Gifts, and Powers, but look on them to have been Impostors, and to have taken so much Pains to propagate a Falsehood, and establish a Fiction of their own. But what Reason have they to think so? None; unless they will say, it is because the Doctrines they preached are so far above human Understanding. — But is this a Reason for thinking them Liars, and Deceivers? To me it rather appears to be a Reason for thinking the contrary. For would Persons of such a Character, who could have nothing but their own Ends in view, have made choice of Doctrines so unlikely to be received? So much above human Understanding, in the Points to be believed, and so opposite, in its Injunctions, to our present Corruption? No, certainly; — it is not to be imagined, if they had been Deceivers, that their Doctrines would have been *such*; How then can any Man think them Deceivers, only because their Doctrines are *such*? It is plain, therefore, that they have no Reason to think them Impostors. Whereas, it has already been shown, that we have very good Reason to be satisfied of their Honesty, and Truth, and to credit the Account of their miraculous Gifts. But tho' we may carry this Point, that the Strangeness of the Doctrines is by no means a good Reason to think

think the Apostles Deceivers, yet still our Opposers will expect that we should answer their Objections against the Doctrines themselves. The first, and chief of which, is, that they think the Doctrine of a *Trinity in Unity* involves a Contradiction, which is a Misapprehension of the Terms ; for we believe not that there are Three distinct Gods, and yet but One God, which would be a direct Contradiction ; but that Three Divine Persons subsist in the same undivided Essence, and therefore are together One God, at the same time that They are relatively Three distinct Persons. Which, tho' it be utterly *incomprehensible*, yet can never be reduced to an express Contradiction. And as for the Incomprehensibleness thereof, that we think cannot be urged as a good Reason for the Disbelief of it, because the Divine Nature is incomprehensible by us in all its Attributes, even in those that are most certain and unquestionable, such as Self-existence, Eternity, Incorporeity, &c. Since it is evident then, that we are not able to comprehend any one Attribute of the Godhead, when we have good Reason to believe this Article revealed to us by God, why should we reject it, only because of its being *incomprehensible* ? — When it is even demonstrable, that every Thing must be so to us, that represents God, as He is? — Another of their

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Objections, is, That the Doctrine of the *Incarnation* of the *Eternal Word* seems to them altogether *incredible*. Wherefore? — As an Alteration in our Nature by some Fault, or Transgression of Man, may be even demonstrated; so the *Necessity* of it is founded on the unquestionable Divine Attributes of Holiness, and Justice. Nor has the *Probability* of it a less solid Foundation in the Goodness, and Mercy of the same Nature, which being acknowledged to be infinite, it follows by clear Consequence, that nothing which appears to have been any way necessary, in order to the Salvation of so many Creatures, can exceed its extent, or be too wonderful an Act, too great, and astonishing a Condescension for it. But besides the manifest Necessity and Probability of it; — Have we not proved that we have also a good Assurance that this Dispensation was foretold, and prefigured from the Beginning, by many Prophetick Predictions, and Types? Have we not proved that we have good Reason to believe, that God gave Attestation to this Doctrine by Voices from Heaven, by the miraculous Works of Jesus and his Apostles, and by raising the former from the Dead? Why then should we refuse to believe this Doctrine, tho' it seem wonderful to us? Is it not probable, and becoming, that all his Works should appear so, to such
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Creatures as we are? And does not the infinite Wonderfulness of the Condescension make it to be so much the better suited to the Nature of God? For how could infinite Goodness have appeared in any Manner, but One that was infinitely Wonderful? It could not have appeared otherwise; it must necessarily have seemed infinitely astonishing to us however it had been displayed, or it had been infinitely below it self, and unworthy of God. These are the Answers we return to their Objections. Mean time they are not able to answer what we urge concerning the Necessity of a Revelation; and our Assurance that the Divine Goodness has not left us without One. They have nothing to reply to the Argument we took from the Excellence of our Religion, so worthy to have come from God, and so unlikely to have proceeded from any besides, much less from the vilest Impostors. They are not able to answer us when we urge that it is inconsistent with the Divine Goodness to suffer an Imposture to put on so much of the Garb of Truth, as appears in Christianity, and to recommend itself so effectually to deluded Mankind. I think therefore I may securely appeal to Reason, and leave *it* to judge, which of the two Beliefs stands on the firmer Foundation;—Ours, which as I have shown is founded on good Grounds,

and solid Reasons, sufficient for the Conviction of any considerate, and well-inclined Person? Or theirs, which is not supported by any one Argument, but such Objections against Christianity, as are easily answered, and could not but arise from any Revelation of an Infinite, and consequently incomprehensible Nature? As also, which a Man of Understanding would *chuse* to subscribe, a Belief proved to be credible, and founded on clear, solid, and (I think) invincible Reasons? Or One manifestly convicted to be more incredible in itself, without any one Reason to support it, but a few Objections against the former, which, as I said, could not but arise, and have been sufficiently answered a thousand times?

C H A P. VI.

I H A V E now compared the Two Creeds *1st*, with regard to bare Credibility, without respect to the Reasons there may be for believing One, or the other. And *2^{dly}*, By examining which Side has the best Reasons to offer in defence of their Belief. I shall, for our yet farther Confirmation, compare them in One View more; — by observing the

the comfortable, the refreshing, and glorious Light there is on the Side of Christianity; and the melancholy, dejecting, and impenetrable Darkness with which *Deism* is over-shadowed. The One is as the Light of God's glorious Presence, the Other as the Gloom of the Land of Darkness. The former is every way worthy of God, of a Being of infinite Goodness, and Justice, and Wisdom; it requires, and employs each of these Attributes as infinite as it is. *Here*, God is set forth as infinite Love, a Lover of his Creatures, and a Father unto them. As having created Man, and all Things besides, in a State of Perfection. All this is what we might certainly depend on, if we had not yet heard it. For how could an unclean Thing proceed from a clean? How could so pure an Essence as that of the Deity produce any thing so impure, and unclean as our Nature is at present? *Here*, the Misery, Mortality, and Depravity of Mankind is shown to be the Punishment, and Consequence of the voluntary Transgression of the first Man, and Woman, who having corrupted and vitiated the Nature which was given them perfect and pure, and being made subject to Death, could produce nothing but what was in like manner depraved, and mortal. For how could a clean Thing proceed from an unclean? — Thus all is clear; the Divine Good-

Goodness is obnoxious to no Imputation, and Men freed from inexplicable Perplexities and Doubts: Nor is this only a perspicuous and probable Account, but it may even be demonstrated, that we must have been thus created in a State of Perfection, and the present Alteration have been owing to ourselves.—What follows is equally agreeable to the Divine Attributes, and therefore equally clear. Here the Supream Being is set forth as infinitely *Just* in passing Sentence on Man's wilful Transgression, yet as beholding with a Compassion, becoming infinite Goodness, the Misery to which they had reduced themselves, and their Posterity; and immediately giving us Hopes of having the Hurt we had received, Revenged on the Person whose Malice had wrought our Destruction. He is set forth as promising a Saviour to Restore Mankind to his Original Integrity, and the Favour of his Maker: He is represented as sending this Redeemer, in the Fulness of Time, clothed with Flesh and Blood, to satisfy the Divine Justice for our Transgression, to free us from Everlasting Punishment, to declare and enforce the Will of God, to assist us with the Spirit of his Grace, and to lead us thro' the Gate of Holiness to the Mansions of Eternal Happiness: He is then said to send his Messengers thro' the World, to proclaim

claim this Salvation, to all that would receive it, on the Terms of Repentance, and Belief in the Name of Jesus. What an insight is hereby afforded us into the Affairs of the Creation! It is even as a Light shining on us from above, and dispelling the Darkness, with which we are covered in our Natural State. *Here*, as we may reasonably expect, we are taught to know the Cause, and the Cure of all our Misery. *Here*, as it is consonant it should, the Divine Goodness shines gloriously forth, and illuminates the Earth, from the Beginning till now; immediately providing such a Remedy for our Misery, and such a Means for our Restoration, as might satisfy the Compassion of his infinite Goodness, without any Derogation from his infinite Justice, and consequently becoming his infinite Wisdom, and Power. In short, the whole Account is perfectly clear, and agreeable to Reason, perfectly becoming, and consistent with the Attributes of God. So that on this Side there is nothing but Clearness, Rationability, and Heavenly Light, illuminating the Mind, reviving the Spirit, rejoicing the Heart, and causing us to exult in God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, as Creatures should rejoice in a Being of Infinite Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power. This is all as it should be. Whereas the System of the *Deists*, is inexplicable by
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Reason, irreconcilable to the Divine Attributes, and consisting of nothing but the most dejecting and uncomfortable Darkness. *Here*, we have Mankind subject to Death, and Misery in a Thousand Shapes, and naturally propense to Evil, without knowing why; — what Darkness! — and yet supposed to be created in this so imperfect, and miserable a Condition, by an infinitely good, and wise, and powerful Being. How irreconcilable! How contradictory! *Here*, we behold all Mankind, (a few particular Persons excepted,) bewildered, and entangled in various Errors, some of them so plausible, that there is no way to distinguish them from Truth; — What a World! O deplorable Blindness! O, miserable Delusion! — And yet a Being of infinite Goodness, and a Lover of Truth, and of Man, is supposed to have beheld all these miserable Errors of its Creatures, for some Thousands of Years, without any Offer, or Endeavour to reclaim them from their Delusions, and bring them to the Knowledge of the Truth; tho' it is plainly impossible that many of them should ever be able to extricate themselves. O, hardest of Suppositions! Is this what might be expected from infinite Goodness? From a Father of his Creatures, a Lover of Souls, and a Lover of Truth? Could infinite Goodness be satisfied with this? — What could the Deity.

Deity of *Epicurus* do less? O, miserable Mankind, if this be the Truth, seeking for the Light of the Divine Beneficence, and Mercy, but looking for it in vain, and finding themselves surrounded with nothing but the most dejecting and uncomfortable Darkness! How should I weep if I thought this to be our Condition! But it certainly is not.

1. Because a God infinitely happy, and powerful, and good, could never produce Creatures in so miserable a Condition; nor a God who is perfect Light, Goodness, and Truth, be supposed to have beheld all this Darkness, and Ignorance, and Error, so long, without being moved by his Goodness to lighten our Darkness, and show us the Way, and the Truth. We hold fast to this Point, and can never be moved from it. 2. Because it is the Property, and Mark of Error, to be obscure, and uncomfortable; not of Truth, whose very Nature it is to be lightsome, and chearing. 3. Because Truth, as revealing God *such* as He is, must necessarily glorify Him even infinitely; and, on the contrary, Falsehood as representing Him *such* as He is not, must necessarily detract as infinitely from his Glory. Now suppose Christianity to be true, and how is God glorified in his Creature Man! Suppose *Deism* true, and Man is the Blot of the Creation, a Work utterly irreconcilable to the Divine Attri-

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butes ; a Creature created in a miserable Condition, and seeming to be utterly neglected by a Being of both infinite Goodness, and Power ! How little is this Representation to the Glory of God ! — Is this thy Love to thy Creatures, O, Father of all Things ! No, no, far be it from my Soul to entertain such a Thought ! I should sin in misrepresenting thy Perfections, and framing an imaginary Deity, if I could so think ; but I dare not, nor cannot, O, Fountain of infinite Goodness ! I believe thy infinite Goodness to be displayed to all Creatures, and that thou hast made choice of the Earth to be the Theater of so glorious a Representation ; and that Thou therefore didst create Man, and permit him to fall that Thou mightest have wherein to show thy infinite Justice, and Goodness, and Wisdom and Power, in all their Glory, and Perfection. This, I thank thy Goodness which has enlightened my Mind, I faithfully believe, and this is worthy to be believed concerning Thee ; but the contrary is not ; I acknowledge Thee not in it, O, Father of Mercies, and God of all Truth ! Who says so of Thee, blasphemes Thee ; He knows Thee not, and represents Thee, what thou art not, nor canst be. But in thy Gospel, O, God, where Thou hast revealed thy self to us, Thou appearest
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as it becomes Thee ! — Just, Good, Wise, Powerful, without Bounds; above our Comprehension in thy Nature, and in every Attribute above finite Conception. Thus it becomes Thee, O God, to appear. This is indeed a Representation of Thee, O God, for there is nothing in it finite. It is true indeed, the infinite Wonderfulness of thy Nature, and Goodness, staggers and overpowers the weak Reason of Man; but how could it be otherwise, than that finite should be swallowed up and lost in the Revelation of infinite? Is this then a Reason for refusing to believe what thou hast revealed concerning thy unsearchable Nature, or thy wise, just, and gracious Oeconomy towards Man? Can Man who is non-plus'd in the Consideration of himself, think his Understanding adequate to the Comprehension of Thee? Alas! They know Thee not, O God, if they think Thou art any Thing that they can comprehend. They know Thee not, if they imagine any Goodness too infinitely wonderful for Thee to express! It becomes the Glory of thy Majesty to have thy Creatures adore, and magnifie thy inconceivable Goodness, and Justice, and Wisdom, and Power, with grateful, and awful Astonishment, and Faith, as Christianity teaches and excites us to do; not that the Sense and Light of thy infinite Goodness should

be eclipsed and hid from us by impenetrable Clouds of Ignorance, and Doubts, as *Deism* falsely supposes it to be. Thou art a God of certain, and undoubted, not of dubious and concealed Goodness. A God of *Light*, not of *Darkness*; where *Light* is, there art Thou, and thy Truth. A God who couldest, and didst create every Thing perfect and good in its kind. A God who satest thy Creatures from the abundant Treasures of thy Goodness, and even surprizest them with the Display of thy boundless Beneficence; a good and provident Shepherd of Mankind, to whom the highest Praise, and Love is due from thy Creatures; not a God who hast created us in our present Condition, and left us from the Beginning to stray as Sheep without a Shepherd; — who beholdest us ignorant, and doubtful of all that greatly concerns us, without compassionating our Condition, and affording us any Assistance, or necessary Information. — I appeal, O, my God, to the Light Thou hast lighted up within us, the Reason Thou hast created, if it must not be as I say; I leave it to judge which of these Characters is most suitable to Thee; which most agreeable to thy acknowledged Goodness. Whether the Former is not to be received with Veneration, as the *Truth*, and really *thine*; the Latter to be rejected, as derogatory from
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thy Glory, and contradictory to the unquestionable Attributes of thy Nature. I appeal to it, concerning Thee, O blessed Father of all Things, let it speak, and say, which is the Description of its Author, and God.

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